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JANUARY 1995

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HAPPY NEW YEAR



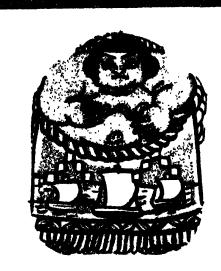
Noshiro Kite



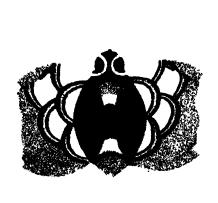
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Design and Layout Subir Roy

Circulation & **Advertisements** C.P. Ravindran

Area Representatives BOMBAY C.H Viswanath 502-A, Arun Chambers 5th Floor. 317, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road,

Opp -Fort Market Bombay 400038 Telex 78050-ASCO IN

MADRAS T Balachandran **Business Representative** 92. Brindavanam Nagar Valasaravakkam Madras 600087 Phone: 420290

WEST BENGAL Chhabi Chatteriee 43 A.L. Banerjee Street Konnagar Dist Hooghly West Bengal 712235

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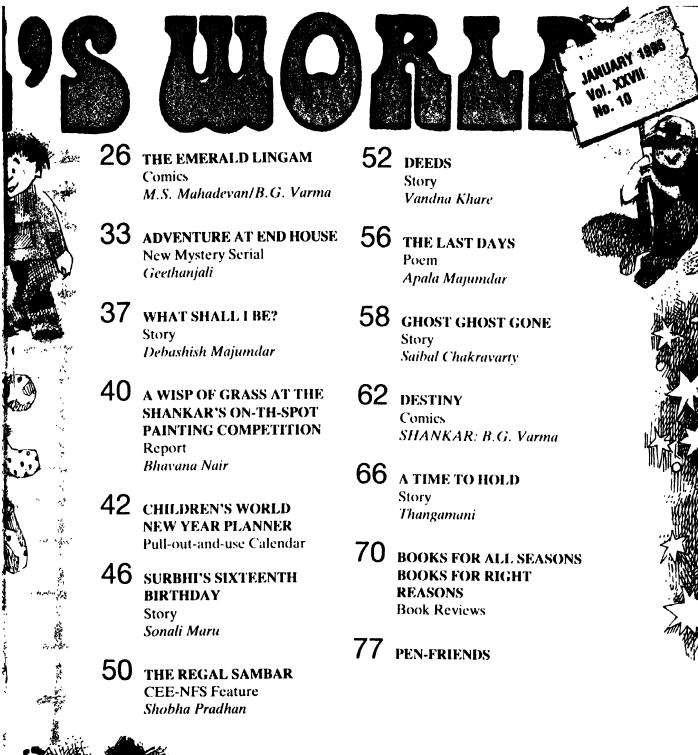
"...IN OUR HANDS" Report Neha Kumar

FRIGHTFUL FLEAS













CHILDREN'S WORLD
Nehru House
4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg
New Delhi 110002
Telegram: CHILDTRUST

Telephones: 3316970–74
Typeset by Futura Graphics

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Dear Readers

The New Year is here and in more ways than one, the world is 'in our hands'.

The guardians of the environment would of course convince you that all else fades into insignificance if you do not have a healthy Earth. But 'of course' our lives revolve round more mundane and down-to-'earth' matters like school and exams, contests and competitions, home and parents, neighbours and friends, sisters and brothers, and the whole business of likes, dislikes, favourites, 'indifferents' and the totally dispensible.

Which brings us back to the basic question of our immediate environment. Our very state of being happy, sad, grouchy or whatever else. The whatever else in turn affecting the mood of those around you. So there you are, happily defying Mother, because school has been one long tiring day. Yet, you are pained to see, she has less of sympathy and more of authority to dispense in favour of your rudeness when, what you are really trying to convey is, that you want a reassuring hug!

And Mother!
She smothers the urge
to call you by the loving

pet name she's given you, suppresses a ready-to-fall tear and restrains the desire to run her hand affectionately through your hair. Firstly, 'of course' in the interests of having a disciplined child. How can you scold and pat without one being a mockery of the other? And secondly 'of course' because poor Ma does not know what hostility she will be met with, if she musses your carefullystyled, unruly hair.

So there! The date changes from December 31,19- to January 1, 19-You sit up all night with bated breath for a Cinderella-like attention-catching change in your life on the new morrow. By January 2 you realise it is still a life full of "Where are my socks, Mummy?" and homework assignments. But things do change. Not so much at the stroke of midnight on December 31 or January 1 or 2 or 3. But slowly, subtly, surely through all the 365 days. And you notice it suddenly when a skirt becomes shorter; with the appearance of the first few hairs on your brother's chin.... when you go to a new class and acquire new books or when Daddy lets you take pictures with his new camera. And yet life unleashes so many question marks. The older and more 'aware' you grow, the more bewildering life

becomes. Who does one turn to for answers?

If what bothers you is akin to what Surabhi faced on her sixteenth birthday.... If it worries you that your sister is not like others but must spend her life in a wheelchair... like 'Deeds'... If you cannot make up your mind if you love or hate your sister, but want to `hold on to time' and cry because she is going away—then 'of course' Children's World is entirely the emotionalenvironment-friendly "person" you could turn to. In 27-odd years it has seen over two generations of readers grow up beautifully.

So beautifully, that those very, right-thinking readers, who have abided and benefited by its values are in turn releasing them into the atmosphere, through their favourite magazine. So sound are these values, that they believe they are actually repaying a debt and are helping in moulding a chaotic world into a stable one.

That's right, Friends, the world is 'in our hands.' Ours to make of it, and make it, what we will.

Let us encircle it then with the tenderness of our caring and the wisdom of our speech and action.

Happy New Year and happy reading till the next issue.

Editor



Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: B.G. Varma

AY festival, and you at once think of fun, frolic and feasting. Also of wearing new clothes and buying toys and other such things.

And of course gaiety, for a festival is a celebration. Often not the less is the spirit of piety and devotion.

A festival may celebrate the birthday of a founder of religion—like the Buddha or a prophet or a saint. Or it may be in honour of a hero or a legendary king or a god or goddess.

Or it may commemorate a day of the past, as does Diwali the homecoming of Rama. Dussehra is in memory of his victory over Ravana.

Or it may celebrate an event in nature like the coming of a new season. Holi, when the people go gay like nature itself, is a spring festival.

A fair is a gathering of people on an important, often religious, day. It may be in a maidan or at a temple or on the banks of a river or lake.

Every religion has its festivals. As people of all religions live in India, we have more festivals than any other country. The Indian calendar is thus a procession of festivals.

Then there are some regional festivals and fairs. Or the same big day may be celebrated differently in different regions or places.

Take Dussehra. The festivities in Delhi are not the same as in Kulu in Himachal Pradesh or Mysore in Karnataka.

The Kumbh Mela at Hardwar or Prayag (Allahabad) is not a fair of the place or the area around. It draws devotees from all over India.

Most of the festivals are religious in origin. But they have a social meaning as well. At many of them, members of a family come together from wherever they are.

Friends and relatives also get together. In fact, the whole community joins in the celebrations. Even strangers are welcome. Also tourists and visitors from abroad.

Festivals and fairs have another importance, too. They help us keep alive memories of the past. In doing so we learn how deep our roots are. In other words, we come to know something of our legends, history and culture.

In this series, we shall, for the sake of convenience, take up the festivals month by month. In passing, we shall also look at the festivals of the month or similar festivals of ther lands.

N our vast country the January weather is not the same everywhere. Up in the Himalayas and down at Kanyakumari it is just the opposite.

It is freezing cold in the northern mountains. Less, and yet quite severe, is the chill in the plains below. A cold wave may make it worse.

Across the Vindhyas the winter is mild. The farther south you go, the milder it gets. In Kerala you will find that the spring has already arrived.

Whatever the weather may be, January has several joyful days all over India.

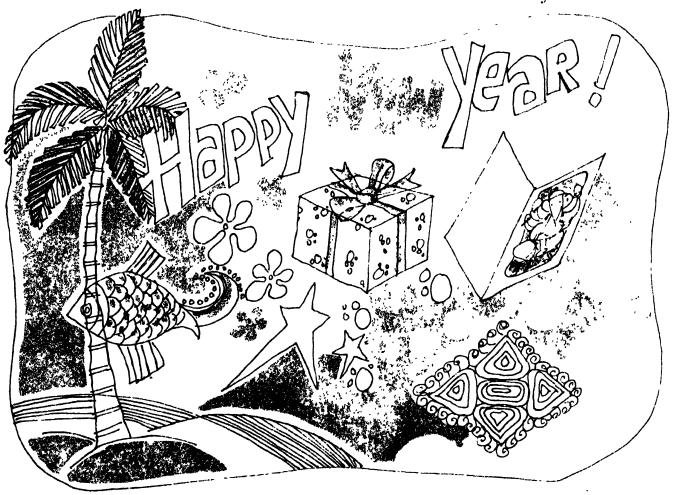
Joy is there at the very start. As the clock strikes the midnight hour, bells ring in the new and ring out the old. "Happy New Year," everybody chirps to everybody around.

You hear more of such chirpings in the morning and all through the day. Greetings also come in the form of gifts and cards. Then there are new diaries and calendars. And many goodies to eat.

January 14—it is the Indian month of *Magh* then—is an important day. For the sun enters the zodiac sign of *Makara* or Capricorn. With that begins its northern course *Uttarayana*.

The day, Makara
Sankranti, is considered
very auspicious. It is
celebrated all over India.
But the mode differs from
region to region.

In Tamil Nadu it is *Pongol* time. As the rice crop is ready, the festival is a kind of thanks giving to the sun god. It lasts three days.



The people clean their houses. They make colourful *kolam* designs on the floors. As on other such occasions, they wear new clothes.

The festival's name means boiling over. This is because in every home a pot is set on the fire. It is filled with milk, rice and sugarcane juice. A little turmeric is also added.

Eagerly the family watches the pot. As it boils over, there is joy in every heart. For it is considered a good or lucky sign.

Friends are welcomed and offered sweets. The greetings then are in the form of a question and answer. "Did the pot boil?" says one. "Yes, it did," replies the other.

On the third day are held outdoor games. It may be bull racing or fighting. Also, money is tied to the horns of a ferocious bull and daring chaps try to snatch it.

In Assam too it is paddy harvest time. The people's joy shows itself in the *Magh* or *Bhogali Bihu* festival.

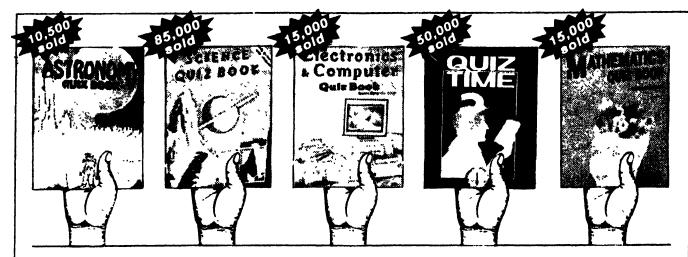
Thatched huts are made in the open. There is singing, dancing and feasting there all night. The *Bhogali* part of the festival's name means eating.

In the morning the huts are ceremonially burnt. Then the people bathe in the ponds or rivers.

Bathing in any river on the Makara Sankranti day is a holy dip. It is holier if the river is sacred. At Allahabad, where the Ganga and the Yamuna flow together, a big bathing fair is held.

It is very cold then. But



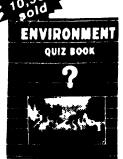


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lakhs of people come there from all around and beyond. They bathe early in the morning and make oblations or offerings of water to the sun.

As *khichri* is eaten and given as alms then, the day is called *Khichri* in U.P.

Much of Himachal is snow and ice in January. Also very cold is the Jammu part of Kashmir. And chill winds blow down to Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and the districts around.

There Makara
Sankranti—actually, its
eve—is celebrated as
Lohri, the festival of fire.

Let us go to a lane in a town after nightfall. The people are out there. They make a pile of logs and twigs and set it alight.

They go piously round the bonfire and cast, as offerings, peanúts, popcorn and *til* (sesame) candy into the flames. Then they make vows or express thanks for the wishes fulfilled.

After that they sit down round the fire. They munch nuts and other goodies. Singing and dancing also goes on.

A baby boy's first Lohri is celebrated with much fervour. So is a bride's in her new home. A gain or promotion also calls for rejoicing and thanks

giving round a bonfire.

Towns like Shimla have ice-skating. Snowmen are also made. This is not necessarily at *Lohri*. The long winter offers many occasions for fun.

Down in Gujarat it is much less cold. There Makara Sankranti is a kite-flying day. Thousands and thousands of cute and colourful kites soar in the sky.

As they fly, the kites go for each other. There are bouts and shouts of triumph. This goes on for hours together.

By the way, Ahmedabad has a kite museum, the only one of its kind in the country.

In Maharashtra the day is celebrated by eating tilgud (sesame and jaggery) sweets. As they exchange the sweets, the people say, "Til-gul ghya, god god bola—Accept the sweets and speak sweet words."

The January mornings in Delhi are cold and misty. But at places you will hear the sound of music. It is the folk and tribal dancers who have come from all over India. They are rehearing for Republic Day (January 26.)

The day is celebrated in every town of the country. But Delhi's parade is simply grand.

Crowds of people watch
CHILDREN'S WORLD JANUARY 1995

it all along its long route. The Rajpath part of it is telecast live. It can thus be seen in any corner of India.

There it is. Shining or painted tanks and guns roll along. Many army and other columns and their bands come marching smartly. School bands are also there.

Schoolchildren present lovely mimes and dances. The boys and girls who have won bravery awards come on the backs of caparisoned elephants.

Colourful floats and folk dancers follow in their turns. So do gaily decorated BSF camels and daredevil bike-riders.

There is a separate folk dance festival. Also a crafts bazar. And other side-shows.

As a fitting finale the Beating of the Retreat is held at Vijay Chowk on January 29. In the light of the setting sun, which lends its own charm to the show, massed bands of the armed forces perform for an hour or so.

When they have withdrawn, flares go up into the dusky sky. Then suddenly the shadowy Central Secretariat and other buildings around stand illuminated.

The sight is at once earthly and unearthly.

A feast of festive words

Festival has many synonyms. But each word has its own shade of meaning. Let us see in what way one word differs from the other.

Festival: a time for merry-making, celebrating and feasting. We also say a film festival or a festival of drama. That is, a special occasion when films are screened or plays staged.

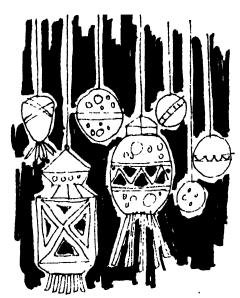
Fest: a shorter word for festival. A filmfest is a film festival.

Fete: a festival with sideshows, competitions and entertainments. A school fete, for example.

Fiesta (esp. in Spain and Latin America): a religious festival or celebration. It also means a holiday or carnival.

Feast: apart from a rich meal, a feast is a joyful religious anniversary. It is





also used in the sense of a festive display, as a feast of lanterns.

Fast: a fast is not a celebration. It is an act or period of fasting for the pious or the faithful.

Carnival: a time for merry-making and being gay. Holi is a spring carnival. We have a school carnival, too.

Gala: a fete or a day of sports and entertainments. A gala opening is a festive or joyous opening.

Jubilee: a time of rejoicing or a special anniversary, as a silver jubilee.

Jamboree: a large gathering of Scouts. The word also means a spree or celebration.

Holiday: the word is made up of holy plus day. Now we mostly use it in the sense of chhutti or day of no work.

Red-letter day: a saint's day or a festival, marked with red letter(s) in the calendar. Also a memora-

ble date or joyful event.

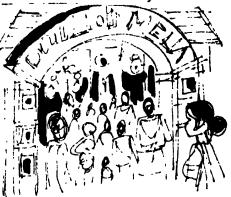
Fair: a festive gathering, usually at a regular time or place, at which people enjoy themselves on merry-go-rounds, etc.

Fairs like Kumbh and Ganga Sagar are holy bathing days. At the time of the holy Pushkar fair in Rajasthan, an animal fair is also held.

Nauchandi, at Meerut in U.P., is a fair when buying and rejoicing goes on for several nights.

A trade fair is mainly for buyers and sellers of particular goods like machinery. But entertainments are also there. Thus a garment fair has fashion and other such shows as well.

Now some fairs are held on the national or international scale. Cities like Delhi and Bombay have



special parks or places for them.

We often use the word mela for fair. It literally means a meeting or coming together of people.





Dear scholars and collars,

Being an older brother is a big responsibility. I can quite understand now when people talk of someone carrying a boulder on his back and a sword hanging over him. They are definitely talking of an older brother. An older brother. Me.

It was all fine when my younger brother was really younger. I mean as long as he did not become older than I, I mean.

Of course you can ask: how can a younger brother become an older brother? Doesn't he always remain younger. Ha! That's what you think—all of you, who don't have younger brothers. And all those of you who do have younger brothers will know exactly what I mean.

Younger brothers don't always stay younger brothers.

Take mine. As I said, he was fine as long as he was my younger brother. Younger than I. And as long as he stayed in LKG, then UKG, then Std. I, he was still my younger brother. But things changed when he reached Std. II.

When he reached Std. II my younger brother joined my school. He



joined My School, do you understand, my school where I had always considered myself safe and free from responsibility. But now all the time at school, I'm like that chap with a boulder on his back and sword hanging over his head.

Look at it this way—
earlier I used to come
home from school and my
brother home from LKG
or UKG or whatever and
we would talk to each
other—at least I would
talk and he would listen. I
would talk about good
things like how difficult
school life was, how one
had to be very noble and
idealistic and hard-working and self-sacrificing to
be in school.

And my brother would listen. I would also tell him how tough my subjects were, how enormously difficult it was to do Maths and History and Geography—almost as difficult as building the

pyramids or helping my mother in the kitchen.

And my brother would sit wide-eyed and listen.

I would also talk to him of the leadership qualities one needed when one was in school, the stuff that had made all the great leaders in the world, leaders, and I would say, "Look at me?"

And he would look. And his eyes would grow very big and round and he would breathe fast because, of course, he was admiring me. Whenever you admire someone, you breathe quite fast. Especially if you are a younger brother admiring an older brother.

But as I said, things have changed. My brother is new in my school and our chats are no longer what they used to be. Here is what happens: I come home weary with all the work I have done, the burdens I have carried,

the calculations I have calculated and the social studies I have social studied. I dump my heavy bag on my desk and I groan as I take off my shoes.

And all my brother does is ask, "Did you get 4/10 in both Maths and Geography or only in Maths?"

Or

"Are you feeling tired because you were standing outside in the corridor, for two periods? I saw you."

Or

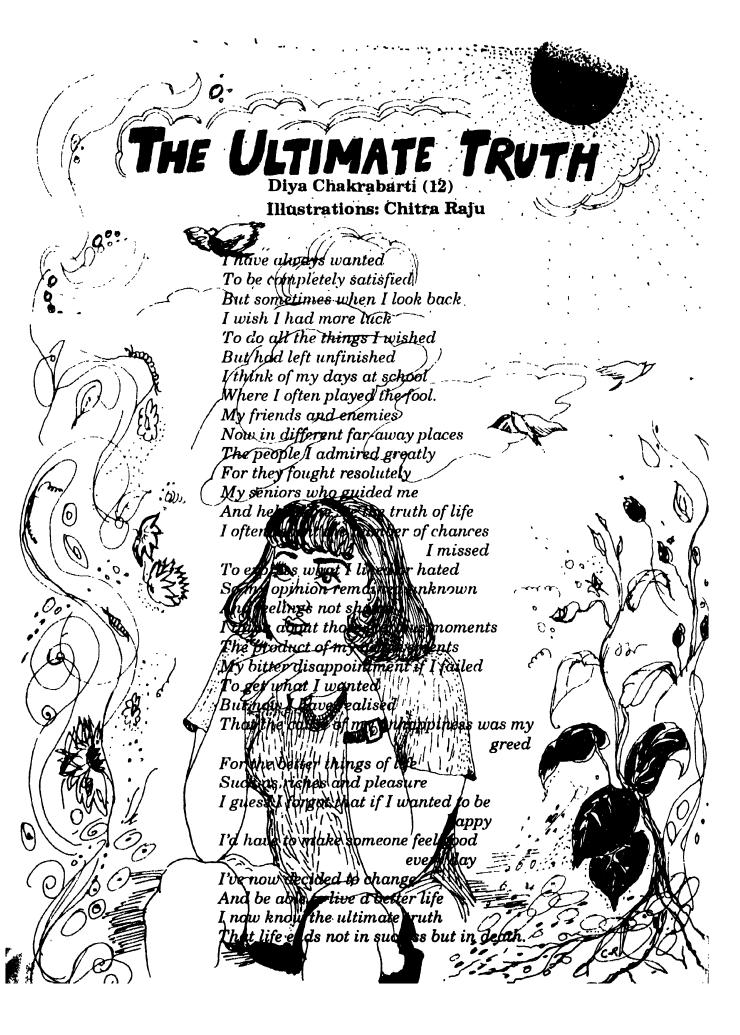
"Why didn't you do anything when that fat boy took the football away from you? Were you too scared to fight?"



Well, I don't think I had better go on. My scholarship, my talents have been attacked. My collars have wilted.

I think I better look for a flat stone and creep under it. Any of you older brothers wanting to join me?

Yours squashed Perky



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Colourful Kites Turn Out 'Tops'

An Exhibition of Japanese Kites and Tops

A report by Sudha Sanjeev

HE Japan Foundation of India in collaboration with the Lalit Kala Akademi held an unusual exhibition of kites and tops at the Akademi's premises between November 11 and November 17, 1994.

The kites displayed had pictures of vibrant and vivid animals, birds, insects and man-all trapped on paper or silk within the framework of crossed bamboo sticks. Startlingly real, these motifs were painted in striking colours revealing different moods and emotions—the everwatchful, wise owl; the sunrise crane with its rich plumage; the horse fly and the cicada, shapely and symmetrical; and the larger-than-life kites depicting the Bunraku puppet, Noshiro, Sagara, the Sumo wrestler and many more characters familiar to the Japanese.

Kite-flying (the name being taken from that of /re graceful, soaring bird) ginated in China about



2000 years ago. Soon these 'paper hawks' caught the imagination of the Japanese across the seas. Japan, of course, had all the raw materials necessary—paper, bamboo and hemp thread.

Till the 17th century, kite-flying was confined to the nobility as paper was

very costly. But, gradually, it spread to the common people. In fact, the ordinary folk took pleasure in flying kites that 'looked down' on their masters!

In the early days, kites were used as a means of communicating secret messages across moats

CHILDREN'S WORLD JANUARY 1995



and into castle keeps.
Some kites have demons faces on them as a prayer for the safety of the family against sickness and disaster.

Musical kites were used to ward off evil spirits. Some of these have reeds with holes in them. When the wind passes through them, a wailing note is produced. Other kites have a string (attached to a bow) that vibrates in the wind and produces musical notes.

On festive occasions, like the Boys Festival, the higher a kite flies, the more auspicious it is meant to be. Fond parents draw pictures and write the names of legendary warriors on the kites in the hope that their children will be equally brave and strong. Tortoises and cranes symbolise long life.

Kites are regarded as the earliest form of aircraft and as man's most primitive expression of his desire to conquer the skies. A great deal of skill goes into the making of a kite that flies well. Even the simplest of kites must adhere to the principles of balance, lift and dragterms which are used for the functioning of aircraft. Once the basic principles are mastered, a kite can

be of any shape tetrahedral or box-shaped.

Kite fighting is an exciting sport—the main aim being to cut the flying cord of the opponent's kite. For this, the upper end of the cord is painted with glue and dipped in powdered glass so that it becomes sharp and can cut easily. Many battles are fought in the sky. It becomes a social occasion with supporters cheering the 'warring' participants.

The other part of the exhibition was an interesting display of a profusion of tops of varied shapes and sizes—starting from the mushroom-

shaped tops to the 'podgy' figurines to the maypole tops. It seemed hard to believe that some were meant to spin at all.

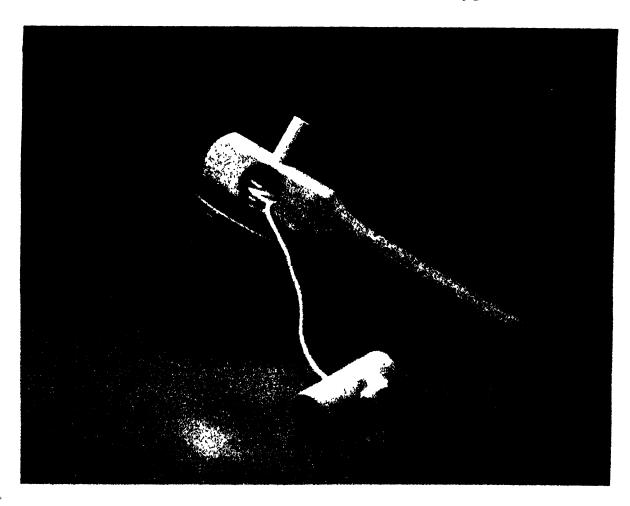
Tops too, like kites, found their way to Japan from China. Initially enjoyed by the aristocrats, spinning tops became immensely popular with the common people in due course of time. Entertainers made 'quarrelling tops' on which people gambled their entire savings and assets.

A kite is a kite and a top is a top, till it is lifted out of the simple, even mundane, level by a high degree of artistry, imagination and innovation—as the Japanese have done to make it an object of beauty and grace. The few children present at the exhibition were exuberant in their appreciation of these age-old sports. They were as delighted with the giant kites as they were with the small button tops.

In a world carried away

by mechanisation, modernisation and the razzle-dazzle of the electronic media, the Japanese exhibition was a reminder of neglected pastimes and pleasures. In cities, where it is as difficult to find a patch of sky as it is to find a patch of open ground, kite flying has become a novelty, if not an impossibility. The next time you see a Sumo wrestler 'soaring' in the sky or 'spinning' on the ground—STOP!

Do you get a whiff of a bygone era?



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L or your precious little girl.



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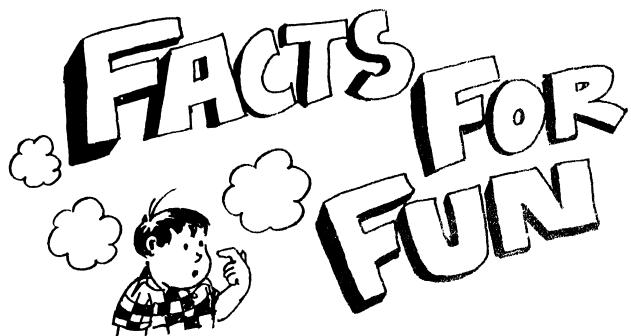
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FEATURES:

- An open-ended Plan.
- Minimum investment of Rs. 1500 and in multiples of Rs. 500 thereafter.
 No upper limit.
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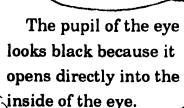


Illustrations: Pushpendra Prakash Sagar

A horse is measured in 'hands'. These probably refer to the width of a person's hand and is taken as four inches. The horse is measured from the ground to the point where it s neck joins it s back.

There are more than 30,000 kinds of fish in the world. The whale shark is

the largest at 15 metres and the dwarf goby of the Philippines the smallest at 1 cm. Cyclone winds move clockwise in the southern hemisphere and anticlockwise in the northern hemisphere.



What is a mountain?
Scientists say a mass of rocks at least 500 metres high is a mountain.
Anything smaller than

Anything smaller than

that is a hill.

For a digital recording, sounds are measured many many times per second and recorded as pulses on tape. This is what makes such recordings, exactly like the original sound.



There is not one North Pole but three. The geographic North Pole is in the Arctic Ocean, about 725 km north of Greenland. Apart from this there is the magnetic North Pole and the geomagnetic North Pole.



Tug-of-war was an Olympic event from 1900 to 1920. There were five men on each side.



Sand dunes can be large. Some of the biggest are located in the Sahara desert and are more than 150 metres high.

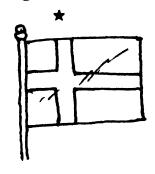


The Empire State
Building in New York was
for long the tallest
building in the world.
Now, however, it is the

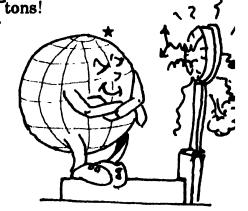
110-floor, 443-metre high Sears Tower in Chicago which is the highest.



The oldest flag still in use is the Danish National Flag. It is called the Danebrog.



How much does the Earth, our planet, weigh? It weighs 6,600,000,000,000,000,000,000 tons—that is 6.6 sextillion





A report by Neha Kumar DPS, R.K. Puram and VST

Photo courtesy DPS, RKP

XCITEMENT ran high on the pleasant autumn morning of November 16, 1994, in Delhi Public School. Ramakrishna Puram. Mr. Maurice Frederick Strong, who had arrived in New Delhi a few hours before. to receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding from the President of India on November 17. was in DPS to address the students. Largely regarded as the 'father' of the environment movement. Mr. Strong has been the Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and had chaired the Earth Summit in Rio-de-Janerio in 1992 Having held other prestigious positions too, it was

natural that the school should feel 'privileged' that Mr. Strong was there to 'talk' to them.

The emerald green lawns, on which a sea of green sweater and blazerclad students squatted. set the tone for the talk. Mr. Maurice Strong, Stefan, a 16-year-old student from Germany, who was to receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for the best essay, Dr. Kamla Chaudhury, who has given meaning and shape to the Environment Awareness movement in India, Maj. Gen. Roy, Mrs. Chona, Principal DPS, and other members of the Board, sat on benches made of logs and were welcomed by the DPS **Environment Education** Council (EEC) members

with gifts of little potted plants.

A welcome song, about the world being "in our hands", the lyrics of which were written by the students themselves, was greatly appreciated by Mr. Strong, as were the two reports by the students on the experiments the DPS EEC—Panchavati had conducted on 'Yamuna Pollution' and 'Pesticides: their Judicious Usage and Environmental Safety'.

Mr. Maurice Strong built up an instant rapport with the students by commenting on the appropriateness of the colour green of their uniform and the prophetic words of their welcome song "the world is in our hands." For, as he emphasised, the state of the world's environment was indeed very much in the hands of children who would be at the helm of affairs tomorrow.

He went on to speak of crucial matters regarding global warming, ozone depletion, pollution and so on. Anecdotes from his childhood, especially his school days in a little village in Canada, bordering the forest, enraptured the students. In Mr. Maurice Strong, the love for, and interaction with, the environment started at a tender age, when the

changes in the weather in . Canada, "which could get as hot as New Delhi in summer, and as cold and even colder because we have a lot of snow," fascinated him. He often ran away from school to the nearby forest to observe these changes.

Nature's remarkable way of looking after its own, he found in the way a rabbit's fur changed from a brownish tinge in summer to a pale white in winter to blend with its surroundings. These observations, mere plea-

sures then, had made a little boy into a sensitive and 'strong' adult supporter and preserver of the world's environment, in the person of Mr. Maurice Strong. And the process of learning carried on. It was now the turn of his grandchildren to come back from school and react with sincerity to the lessons on environment learnt in school. A sample of which was his little granddaughter coming home from school one day and asking his wife, "Grandma why do you kill



whales?"

"I don't kill whales."
"Of course you do,
indirectly. The lipstick
you're wearing requires
whales to be killed..."
Which naturally made the
grandmother think twice
about what she used in
future.

In the brief half hour that he spoke, Mr.
Maurice Strong thus not only endeared himself to the students with such down to earth matters, but also subtly and surely left a mark on those impressionable minds about the need to conserve our natural resources in order to have a healthy, living and prospering planet Earth.

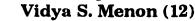
Much to the pleasure of the students, Mr. Strong said that after the Earth Summit at Rio, where he had actually told Presi-

dents. Prime Ministers and other heads of State that if the environmental problems were really to be dealt with, at the grass roots level, he would have to talk to them without their aides, and had actually done so in one session—talking to the students that day had been one of his best experiences. The feelings were mutual, because so inspired and moved by Mr. Maurice Strong's speech was the school, staff and guests present, that they rose as one man to the call of the Principal to pledge to take every step possible to protect our environment and prevent the exploitation of our natural resources.

With such a rare and deep understanding of the Earth and the problems facing it, it was more than apparent that there could be no more appropriate and deserving a person than Mr. Maurice Strong for the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding.

His encouraging words should be inspiration enough for DPS, R.K. Puram's Panchavati Club to carry on their good work for the preservation of the environment, especially since they have Mr. Salman Khurshid as President of the Society and Dr. Kamla Chowdhury herself as the Chairperson. Now that adult luminaries like Mr. Strong have so confidently and firmly told children that the world indeed is "in our hands", it is up to the children of the world to make it the green haven they have always visualised it to be.

Somewhere Beyond the Earth..



Somewhere beyond the earth, I hear, there is another world. Another world like our earth? Not one that I know.

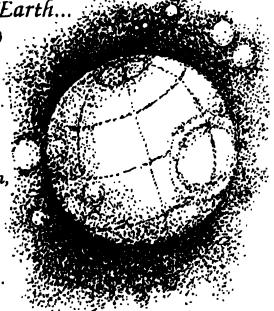
A world where no flowers bloom, With red, yellow and blue. There's no golden sun to go down

There's no golden sun to go down, Into a sea that is blue.

The people say that it's true. What about you?

What about you? They say there's no life

Up there, and no sky that is blue.







Illustrations: Chitra Raju

he bravest of men will flinch these days when faced by a puny flea, for the killer disease, plague, commutes from rats to humans through this insect.

Several hundred species of fleas are known. They are wingless, parasitic insects 2 mm long which afflict many warmblooded animals, including man.

A flea's body is flattened sideways, which is to say that it is much taller and longer than it is thick. This helps it to move easily between the hairs of its host. It's legs have numerous hooks which prevent it from falling off the host's body. To protect it from the scratching and biting of its host, it has a very tough body. It has mouth parts specially adapted for sucking blood.

The female flea lays its

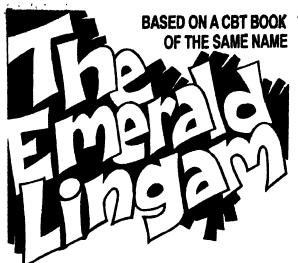
egg in refuse to be found around the host's den. The larvae hatching out feed on this refuse as well as catch small insects. They do not suck blood. On reaching the pupal stage, the larvae spin a cocoon and remain in it for a fairly long time. Even when fully developed, they do not come out of the cocoon, but wait for signs of a host nearby. These are the vibrations caused by the movements of any animal. As soon as they sense these, they come out of their cocoons and latch themselves onto the unfortunate animal.

This is the reason why people entering an empty house after several months can encounter fleas. The fully developed fleas ensconed in cocoons are waiting for the appropriate signals. On sensing the footfalls of the new

inhabitants, they promptly emerge out of their cocoons to welcome the unsuspecting visitors with their painful bites.

Fleas are renowned for their jumping ability. They can jump 35 cm across (125) times their body length) or 20 cm high (100 times their height). This is why people are advised to sleep on cots two feet above the ground during plague epidemics.

Fleas are most feared because they are carriers of the dreaded disease plague. In medieval times in Europe this disease is believed to have killed 25 million people. However, plague is a disease of rodents and spreads to humans through the rat fleas only. Human fleas are not known to be carriers of this disease.



STORY: MADHAVI MAHADEVAN ILLUSTRATIONS: B.G. VARMA













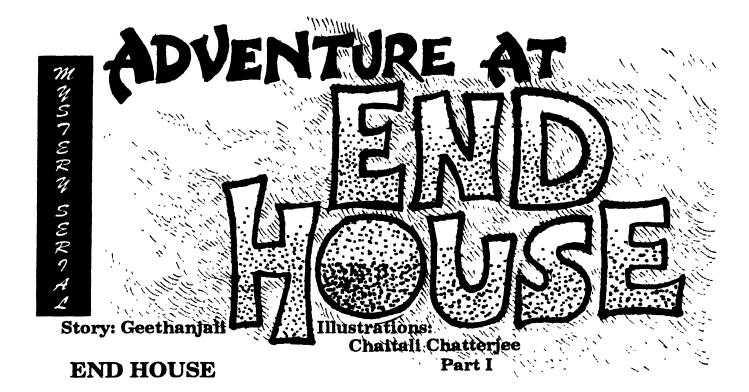












ERE we are, Mum! We have reached Madras!" Manisha squealed in excitement as the Grand Trunk Express pulled into Madras Central station.

Mrs. Menon, who was busy collecting the luggage together, smiled absently.

Manisha jumped up from her seat, "Will Grandmother send someone to meet us? I suppose Vivek, Siddharth and Sheetal will come too." She was silent for a while thinking of her friends.

Manisha was very fond of Sheetal who lived in the house opposite her grandmother's. She also liked Vivek and Siddharth a great deal. They were brothers and lived in the house next to her grand-

mother's. Manisha sighed, "I do wish they would come! I can hardly wait to see them!"

The train came to a slow stop. Manisha jumped out and looked around.

"Nishy! It is great to see you again," came an excited voice.

Manisha turned round and flung her arms round a pretty nine-year-old girl with a long ponytail and a pixie-like face, "Sheetal! I did hope you would come!"

"Vivek and Siddharth are here, too," Sheetal said. "We came along with our neighbour, Dr. Ray."

"Hello, Nishy," Vivek said as he came walking up towards Manisha and her mother.

Siddharth gave Manisha his usual huge grin. "So you have turned up like a bad penny, haven't you?" he greeted. "Aunty, this is Dr. Ray. He lives in Gandhi Lane, too," Vivek did the introductions.

Manisha's mother smiled at the doctor, "It is nice of you to take the trouble to meet us," she said.

Dr. Ray grinned. He was hefty and bearded with merry, twinkling eyes and a wide smile. "The children bulldozed me into bringing them here. They could hardly wait to see Manisha."

Manisha liked the doctor at once. "He is jolly, isn't he?" she whispered to Siddharth.

He nodded, "He moved in two months ago into the house next to Sheetal's. He owns a beautiful black cat called Duchess."

"Nishy, I am so glad that you will be staying with your grandmother for a few years. Mum told me that your Dad has gone to Japan and that you will be here till he comes back."

"It will be fun having you here again," Vivek said. "We all missed you."

"Do you know, Sheetal cried buckets and buckets, when you left after the summer holidays last year?" Siddharth laughed.

Sheetal lunged out at him, "It is all very well for you to laugh. You don't know how lonely it is to be an only child. You have Vivek for company."

Manisha slipped her hand into Sheetal's, "I shall be going to your school. We can have fun together."

Siddharth rolled his eyes heavenward. "I hope that doesn't mean that you and Sheetal will gang up on us as you used to do last summer," he said.

"Where are we going?"
Vivek wondered as the
doctor shepherded them
into a little coffee shop
saying, "I bet you children
would like to have something to drink. It is a hot
day, isn't it?"

"Please don't bother,"

Mrs. Menon said hastily, but the doctor led them to a table and ordered some grape juice for the children and coffee for himself and Mrs. Menon.

"So, Manisha, it is going to be a change for you from Delhi to Madras."

"Not really," Manisha said sipping her cool juice. "You know, Uncle, I usually come here every summer. I know everyone in Gandhi Lane. It won't be difficult to settle down here. In fact, I know I will love it." Manisha turned to Vivek, "It is just the same, isn't it, Vivek?"

Vivek sipped his juice thoughtfully, "Well, yes. Aunt Maya and her dog Titan, are still there. Titan is still as lazy as ever..."

"Pshaw! That fat dog," the doctor said in contempt. "She does nothing but eat and sleep all day," Manisha giggled. She was very fond of Titan but she could not help thinking that the doctor was right.

"Mrs. Mahadev is as grumpy as ever," Sheetal said and then bit her lips as the doctor shot her a surprised look.

"Hey, Nishy, do you know End House has got a new occupant? She moved in just a week ago. Her name is Daisy." Siddharth said. "Is she nice?" Manisha asked. Siddharth shook his head, I don't know. "We see her pottering about in her garden sometimes. She must be about forty years old."

"She is an Anglo-Indian. She lives all alone at End House. She was in Dehradun earlier, staying with an aunt. When the aunt died she came to End House."

"From where did you get all this information about Miss Daisy?"
Dr. Ray asked in surprise.

Vivek grinned, "From Aunt Maya, of course. She makes it a point to find out everything about everyone."

"Yes," Sheetal supplied artlessly. "We call her the Tattler."

Mrs. Menon said hastily, "Let us get going now."

The children followed the adults to a waiting taxi. There was the usual scramble for the window seat. As the taxi sped down the busy roads, the children chattered excitedly. Finally they left the city and entered a sleepy. suburban area. The children started a game of counting the number of brown cows they saw on the way. They were so engrossed that the taxi sped into Gandhi Lane before they realised it.

"Gosh! We have arrived!" Manisha shouted, giving the doctor the fright of his life. The taxi came to a halt with a sharp screaming of brakes and the children tumbled out. Manisha gazed happily at the familiar lane. A fat golden Labrador came waddling up towards the children.

"Titan!" Manisha exclaimed kneeling down and stroking the golden "Of course, she does,"
Miss Maya said as she came out of her house.
"Hello, Nishy dear! Hello Mrs. Menon. Nice to have you here again." Manisha smiled at the sharp-nosed, bright-eyed young lady they called the 'Tattler'. Her eyes then fell on a fluffy, black cat who was sunning herself regally on the wall of Dr. Ray's house.

Vivek followed her gaze.

Titan was not at all pleased to have the attention diverted from her to Duchess. She ran to the wall and barked indignantly. Duchess lifted a lazy head and looked down disinterestedly at Titan. Then, as though she could not be bothered by someone as measly as Titan, she curled up and went to sleep again.

The familiar rap-rap of a walking stick made Manisha turn towards her



Grandmother hobbled to the gate, a smile on her wizened cheeks. "Well, so there you are," she exclaimed in joy.

A strong scent of eucalyptus greeted Manisha as she hugged her grandmother.

Grandmother hitched her spectacles firmly on her nose and gazed proudly at her granddaughter. "I am glad to see you," she declared.

As Manisha followed her grandmother inside, a feeling of happiness engulfed her. She had the feeling that she was in for some happy times.

That evening, the children met in Manisha's garden. Siddharth looked towards End House. "I am glad that the surly Mr. Raj and his wife have left. I only hope that Miss Daisy turns out to be nice."

Sheetal dipped a green mango into a plate of chilly powder and salt. "She looks kind. She has beautiful grey eyes, silvery white hair and a lovely smile."

"You never know,"
Vivek said gloomily. "She
may be grumpy and
cranky."

"Well I hope not," a voice declared.

Manisha jumped.

Sheetal dropped her mango.

Siddharth gave a start.
Vivek grew red in the face as he saw Miss Daisy looking at them over her fence. Vivek felt like running away. Siddharth, looking at Miss Daisy's plump smiling face, was relieved to see a twinkle

Sheetal grinned at her. "Hello, Aunty," she greeted in her usual friendly manner. Miss Daisy smiled back at her. "Come on, tell me your names," she invited.

lurking in her grey eyes.

The children introduced themselves.

"Well, I am Daisy Andrews. I live all alone. Why don't you children come over to my house?" The friendly old lady grinned.

"Can we really?"
Sheetal demanded. "The old couple who lived there before never allowed children inside End House."

"Oh, come along in, children. I love children. I am a lonely old lady and I like to have young people around me."

So the four children ray inside End House.

End House was so called because it lay rig at the end of Gandhi Lane. Sheetal thought

that End House looked nice and cosy nestling at the corner of the lane.

The children looked round the garden. Miss Daisy had cleared all the weeds. "I am going to have a garden here," she said smiling all over her plump face.

"We can help you,"
Siddharth offered, for he
was very fond of gardening. "I can give you some
flowering plants."

"That would be very nice of you, my boy," Miss Daisy said, pleased. "Come on inside, children."

The children trooped inside the house. The house was spick and span. Sheetal gazed in fascination at the rows of dolls in the show case. Manisha stared at the piano in the room. Vivek and Siddharth ran to examine the bookshelves.

"My word," Siddharth exclaimed, "End House is an interesting place indeed!"



CHILDREN'S WORLD JANUARY 1995



Story: Debashish Majumdar

ANDIP'S mother was jubilant.
"Your Uncle Ranen has qualified to be an engineer," she said.

"An engineer?" Sandip muttered. "Wow, great!"

A whole world of tractors, ships, roads, buildings and bridges floated before his eyes.

"Well, dear," said mother, "now what have you decided to be?" Sandip's father was a businessman. He knew that, one day, the mantle of the family business would rest upon his shoulders. Business? The idea never really appealed to him. He, of course, agreed with

his father that a successful businessman can lead a very comfortable life. Yet, the art of making money was not his cup of tea.

The adventures and stories of pirates haunted him. He specially liked *Treasure Island* by R.L. Stevenson, the story of which his class-teacher had narrated in class, one day.

"Ah...great!" he told himself, "I'd rather be the Captain of a sailing ship..." But when his mother described to him how the famous passenger liner, The Titantic sank along with its crew and all the passengers, Sandip changed his mind. "Oh...it's too risky," he concluded.

"Maybe I'll become a good doctor and serve humanity at large," he thought philosophically. He expressed his desire to Bobby, his friend, as they watched TV and sipped cold drinks, "That's a good idea, no doubt," said Bobby as he pointed to the idiot-box. "But look at that!"

Sandip was very impressed by the Formula-I Brazilian racing driver Ayrton Senna's sizzling performance on the fast tracks.

"Hey, why not?" Sandip suggested, excitedly, "I'd rather become a racing car driver when I grow up..." But his dream was short-lived. One day, at the breakfast table, the tragic news broke out. Reckless and unsafe driving led to Senna's car bursting into flames and engulfing the champion, too.

"In life, when you choose a career," said mother, "I'm afraid you can't afford to be reckless, you know..."

That set Sandip's mindclock ticking once again.

It was during his customary morning jog, that Sandip bumped into Devika who had taken her dog out for a run.

"Hi Sandip!" she chattered excitedly. "Papa has promised to send me to Paris for a fashion-designing course after completing school..."

"Congratulations!" said Sandip quickly. "You've decided to become a fashion designer when you grow up?"

"Yes, that's right," Devika smiled. "And what about you, Sandip?"

Sandip blushed with embarrassment, "Actually I haven't decided... as yet..." He recovered quickly to add: "Next time I'm sure I'll be able to tell you what I want to be..."

Sandip looked quite worried over the weekend. He spent the entire Sunday reading interesting stories for children. "Ah...that's it!" he exclaimed, "I'll be a writer when I grow up..."

When mother heard Sandip's wish, she was very pleased. "A writer of children's stories?" She smiled, "An excellent idea, Sandip...but I'm afraid that unless you write as well as Blyton, Roald Dahl or the Ahlbergs—you can't make a living out of writing for kids..." So, Sandip dropped his latest plan. Maybe, writing would be his hobby. He sat and wondered—oh, what would he be?

If he could draw well enough, he could have attempted to become a Van Gogh, Picasso or M.F. Hussain. A sculptor like Michaelangelo? That wasn't in his blood.

When his school took him on a camping expedition, he suddenly wanted to become an explorer. He even told his teacher about it. "Son, I'm glad," he said, "but then there aren't too many lands on



CHILDREN'S WORLD JANUARY 1995

earth to explore..."

Possibly, had Sandip lived a few centuries earlier, he could have become a Christopher Columbus or Captain Cook...

"Don't be too disappointed, Sandip," smiled his teacher, "you can explore space..."

"An astronaut?" Sandip recalled that only a handful of Indians like Rakesh Sharma had actually visited space. Back home, he felt miserable. When the Nobel Prizes were announced he struck gold.

"Wow...a scientist," he remarked, "yes...that's what I'll be..." Then he wondered. If he happened to spend his entire life doing research and he didn't achieve a significant breakthrough, then he would have wasted his time.

In fact, when the World Cup Soccer fever had attacked his neighbourhood, Sandip wanted to become a famous footballer like Maradona. With Maradona's fall from grace, Sandip had done away with this idea, too.

Utterly confused, he volunteered to join his mother who was going away on a week's holiday to his grandfather's

village home. On the way, Sandip expressed his anxiety to his mother.

"Sandip dear, don't worry," said mother. "When the moment arrives, I'm sure you'll be able to decide what you want to be..."

On their arrival at grandfather's home, Sandip's mother explained to her father why Sandip looked so disturbed. Now Sandip's grandfather was a simple but very learned man. He had, after all, spent over twenty years as a village school-master.

"Dadu," said Sandip, "I can't act like Marlon
Brando or Amitabh
Bachchan ... nor can I sing. So I can never become a Pankaj Udhas or Mukesh..." He admitted sadly, "Oh I'm honestly very confused, believe me..."

Dadu patted Sandip's young shoulders. Then he smilingly told him, "Sandip, when you grow up ... first of all, you must choose to become a MAN!"

He laughed out loudly, sipping a cup of steaming, hot tea. Then he continued, "In fact you must become a part of everything you wanted to be... like a ship's captain, if you do fall into troubled waters you must be able

to swim against life's odds and emerge victorious. Like a painter, you must draw your own portrait of honesty for everyone else to see...like a sculptor, you must carve out memorable deeds along the way... like an explorer, you must be able to discover the brighter side of lifemarking the good qualities in people you know and picking up a lesson or two. Now like a racing car driver, set yourself up for the drive with confidence..."

Sandip was overjoyed. He kissed his grandfather on both his wrinkled cheeks.

"I'm sure, dear grandchild," rounded off Sandip's grandfather, "if you follow my advice, you can become a very fine person one day..."

"Oh Dadu, thank you!" Sandip danced about excitedly. "Now I know what I'll be when I grow



A WISP OF GRASS AT THE SHANKAR'S ON-THE-SPOT PAINTING COMPETITION

A report by Bhavana Nair

S day broke over the Modern School grounds on December 4, 1994, a chatty wisp of grass said to her neighbour, "I can feel it in my roots-today is the day of the Shankar's Onthe-Spot Painting Competition. They have been making preparations for the last three daysthe tents, chairs and tables, microphones, loudspeakers, barricades. The children will arrive in a few hours..."

Many households across
Delhi and its satellite
towns, must have risen
early that morning as
parents hurried to get
their children ready to
participate in the
Competition.

By 9,30 a.m. the barricades at the Modern School grounds were thronged by parents, teachers and eager participants waiting to enter the enclosures. As they were allowed entry, the wisp of grass commented, "Phew! here they come now! One, two, three, four... I have lost count. Am I glad the sun is out! It will dry up all this dew fast. Nice day to be out of doors, isn't it?"

The loudspeakers broke their silence as the announcer welcomed the participants, "The Competition will begin at 10 o'clock and go on till 1.30 p.m. You will be given your topics for the day and you may choose to draw one or more of the subjects..."

The children soon settled down, some veterans of many a Shankar's On-the Spot Painting Competition and bursting with confidence. They were a direct contrast to the newcomers, some of whom were on the verge of tears at being separated from their parents.

As the volunteers started distributing the papers with the topics printed on them, the loudspeakers blared again, "The subjects for the five to eight-year-olds are 'Rainy Day', 'Play time', 'Gardening', 'Animals I Love', 'Train', and 'Balloons'. The nine to twelve-vear-olds can choose from 'Colourful Earth', 'Walking on a Busy City Road', 'Musical Concert', 'Foodstall/ Supermarket', 'Robots at Work', and 'The World as I See It'. The topics for the thirteen to sixteen-yearolds are 'Train Journey', 'Life in 2002 AD', 'Concrete Jungle', 'Natural Beauties of Mother Earth'. 'Cold Weather', and 'The World Through the Eyes of a Child'."







CHILDREN'E

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The wisp of grass said to her neighbour, "It is almost noon. Many of the younger children have already finished. It is the older children who take longer to finish."

The neighbour commented, "Look, the parents have broken the first barricade and are at the second, literally breathing down the necks of the volunteers collecting the paintings."

"Well, you can't blame the parents really. They are worried lest they lose their children in the crowd. But I do wish they would let their children be, instead of yelling instructions from the barricades. Listen to that," said the wisp of grass.

"Hoi, take off your sweater, Anu," shouted an anxious mother. "You will fall ill like you did at the picnic last week. Anu...u..."

"Rohit, draw more animals. Fill in more colours... put the colours back in the box..." instructed another parent, unfazed by a volunteer's dark look.

"Sir, please tell that



From the past: Mr. Shankar watches as children paint their masterpieces at the OTS in 1986

man not to give my child water. She is supposed to drink only boiled water. What is he doing, that man? Do something," screamed a near-apopletic parent to a volunteer.

The wisp of grass piped up again, "There are more children here today than ever before. Wouldn't Mr. Shankar have been pleased?"

"Who Mr. Shankar?" asked the neighbour who had sprung up only recently.

"He was the gentleman who began this competition. He would supervise all preparations and be here early to watch all the children coming in. Then he would walk around looking at their work. I wonder how many of the kids here today even know of him. A pity!"

Later, at the announcement booth a volunteer sighed, "No lost children. Great!"

The wisp of grass, at this point, could not help but remark, "There, the competition is over for this year. Didn't you love the excitement? We will meet again next year. Goodbye."

"Goodbye!" the neighbour whispered shyly, "till next year then."

Surbhi's

Sixteenth Birthday

Story: Sonali Maru

come early in the morning to wish her.

"Oh, *Didi*, what a surprise," said Surbhi.

"You just wait Surbhi, you'll get lots of surprises today. After all today is your day," said Sulekha, and hugged her.

Sulekha was Surbhi's elder by a couple of years, but they were very close. For Surbhi, Sulekha was more of a friend and a guide than an elder sister. Sulekha was Surbhi's idol. She would discuss all her problems with her and Sulekha was always willing to help her out, advise her and give her teen tales a sympathetic ear.

As the day progressed Surbhi received umpteen number of calls from her cousins, uncles, aunts and friends. And to top it all, her friends had planned a surprise party for her in the afternoon. Surbhi was

ecstatic. What a memorable sixteenth birthday it was turning out to be.

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

In the evening when she returned from the party, there was another surprise party for her. Her parents had invited all their relatives over for dinner.

"Come, darling," said Surbhi's father. "See all of us are waiting for you to cut the cake."

"Oh,Father! I am too old for all this," said Surbhi.

"Now come on, Surbhi, a couple of years more and you'll be through with your teens, enjoy it while you can," teased Saurabh, another cousin.

All her uncles and aunts were there. 'Ramesh mama Rekha mami, Chhote Chacha and Chachi, Rinku masi, Sailesh bhaiya, all of them had come. How nice of them!' thought Surbhi, as

T was a strange feeling, a feeling of happiness and satisfaction. The kind when one feels that the Earth is the best place to be in and that nothing could ever go wrong with life. Surbhi wondered what was going to be so special today; that she was experiencing such wonderful feelings, early in the morning.

Then, suddenly, like a flash, it struck her, oh, how could she forget! It was her sixteenth birthday. Yes, she was 16 today. Sweet sixteen.

When she jumped out of bed, she saw two lovely cards by her bedside, one from her parents and the other from her little brother.

As she came out of her room, she was greeted with "Happy Birthday to You, Many boy friends to you," from her favourite cousin Sulekha, who had

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she cut the cake and everyone clapped and sang, "Happy Birthday to You."

Her hands were full of chocolate cream and Surbhi went to wash them. While she was washing her hands, Surbhi felt a hand on her shoulder, "Happy Birthday my dear," said Mr. Gupta, taking her hand and squeezing it.

"Oh... oh it's you. Thank you, uncle, thank you very much, why don't you come out?"

Mr. Gupta was her father's close friend. He was close enough to be considered a part of the family and was invited to every family function. He was a bachelor and staved alone. When Surbhi was a child she had been very fond of Gupta uncle. She loved playing with him and going out with him for ice-cream. But for the last couple of years she had tried to avoid him as far as possible.

Now Surbhi saw Sulekha coming. "Didi, why don't you show Gupta uncle where Papa is?" she said, with relief very evident in her voice.

"Suré," said Sulekha and led Mr. Gupta to the party, which was in full averng. As dinner was being served, Surbhi went out into the lawns to fetch the empty glasses, when she heard the voice again.

"Come... come, let me help you, poor darling, you shouldn't be working on your birthday." It was Mr. Gupta. He had a glass in his hand and seemed a little unsteady, as he took the glasses from Surbhi's hand. He staggered closer to her.

Surbhi was terrified. There was no one in the garden, they were all getting ready for dinner. She had to face Mr. Gupta and she couldn't even shout. What could she have shouted anyway? He was only trying to help her. Who would understand the undertones? As these thoughts flooded her mind, Mr. Gupta, in trying to take a step forward lost balance and came crashing down on the chair nearby which collapsed. The commotion got everyone outside.

"What happened? What was the noise?" called out Surbhi's mother.

"Oh...Uh! Uncle was just trying to help me, and in the process lost his balance," blurted Surbhi, and ran inside to her room.

"Where's Surbhi disap-CHILDREN'S WORLD JANUARY 1995 peared now? We are all waiting for her," asked her father, a little irritated. "Why don't you go and call her, Sulekha."

"Surbhi, Surbhi, come on, we are waiting for you. Hurry up and come out," said Sulekha who had come in search of her.

When no one replied, she opened the door. Surbhi was sitting on a corner of her bed, crying.

"Surbhi, what happened, what's wrong, why are you crying?" asked Sulekha a little bewildered.

Surbhi got up and hugged her and sobbed uncontrollably, "It's...it's Gupta uncle," she cried.

"What has he done?" asked Sulekha, sounding shocked.

"I... I don't know. It's just the way he acts...he looks....maybe I am wrong....but I don't like him...the way he squeezed my hand... I know, I may be wrong but..." and Surbhi started crying again.

"Come... come, my little sister, this is all a part of growing up and facing life. I know just how you feel," said Sulekha, stroking her hair. "It's difficult to tell such things to your parents, in fact sometimes

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you start blaming yourself."

"Yes, exactly," interjected Surbhi, "but what have I done?"

"Nothing... listen, stop crying and wash your face. Everybody is waiting for you," said Sulekha, "and remember our plan, okay? Be a brave girl Surbhi. This is just the beginning. You might have to face situations which are worse than this and the best defence is to be prepared and never be scared," said Sulekha and walked out.

"God, Surbhi! Where have you been?" said her

father. He was angry. "Half of us have already finished. Now come on and have your food."

Everyone settled round the table. By some strange coincidence, Gupta uncle was seated next to Surbhi, who was in the corner.

Just when everyone was busy eating, Surbhi dropped her spoon on the plate with a clatter and said loudly, "Uncle, would you please take your hand off my lap?"

Whatever little noise there was, stopped. You could have heard a pin drop in the silence. Surbhi looked straight at Mr.
Gupta and then at
Sulekha, who returned
her gaze. Her parents
were stunned and Mr.
Gupta was red. He
flushed both with anger
and embarrassment. He
had been stripped of his
self-respect.

That night when everyone had left, Surbhi's mother came to her room, "You have grown up, haven't you?" she said, "But I am confident that you'll be able to take care of yourself... Good night, Surbhi." She kissed Surbhi on her forehead, and left.



THE REGAL SAMBAR



Text: Shobha Pradhan Illustration: Acharya M. CEE-NFS

EEP in the forest in the gathering dusk, a Sambar stag is 'belling' a series of short sharp 'Pooks', a warning to all who hear: "Danger—A tiger is on the move!"

The Sambar is the largest deer in India. It lives in thick forests where its large ears, seen dimly through the undergrowth, look like the

leaves of a teak tree. The Sambar is deep brown in colour, with the males darker than the females and the young. Sambar are fond of wallowing in mud which makes them look even darker than they are. Both males and females have manes, and their hair is coarse and thick.

A Sambar stag is around 140 cm. tall at the CHILDREN'S WORLD JANUARY 1995

shoulder and weighs around 270 kg. Their antlers are upto 110-115 cm. long, with three points each. Antlers are shed every year, in March/April, and a new pair is fully grown by September. The antlers are fully developed by the fourth year. The stags clean the antlers by rubbing them against trees.

The Sambar is of the

genus Rusa, called Rusa aristotelis. It is known as **Jerai** in the Himalayas, Maha in Terai, Meru in Marathi, and Kadavi or Kodaba in Kannada. It belongs to the family of Rusine deer, known by the shape of its antlers with one basal tine (prong), and the main beam dividing into two branches. This family of deer includes the Hangul of Kashmir. The Sambar is widely distributed throughout India, with a related variety being found in Burma and the Malay peninsula. It is a forest loving animal, staying where thick cover is available. The Sambar's range is now greatly reduced due to deforestation and the reduction in forest cover.

The Sambar is fond of coarse grasses found growing on the banks of nullahs, and leaves, young shoots and fruit of a variety of plants. Flowers of the Mahua (Madhuca indica) tree, and Aonla (Embelica officinalis) fruit are favourite food. They also eat the bark of certain trees and are sometimes forced to raid the

crops of villages near the forests for food, due to the shrinking of their natural habitat. They are able to go without water for a couple of days at a stretch.

Sambar stags fight for the possession of territory, where the winner becomes the master stag of a particular area. The stags push each other with their antlers, till one or the other gives in. They do not fight for their mates, or for building a herd. Living in thick forests as they do, the collection of a herd is not possible.

The breeding season is in December. The harem is limited to a few hinds. The hinds are attracted to the stags by their call and the scent of the face glands which are everted or turned inside out during the rut. One or two fawns are born around the start of the monsoon. These stay with the mother for two years. Hinds usually breed only once in three years. Big stags live a solitary life after the breeding season and only smaller stags are found with the hinds.

The Sambar is a nocturnal animal, retiring to

cover early in the morning, and coming out to feed in the late afternoon. It has a distinctive alarm call, often called 'belling' a short sharp 'pook' which it sounds on spotting a predator, be it a man, a tiger, a leopard, or wild dogs. They also communicate by stamping the ground with a forefoot; a mother summons her fawns in this way.

The Sambar have very keen hearing and sense of smell, but only moderate eyesight like other forest dwelling animals. The Sambar depends on its powers of smell and hearing for self-preservation from predators.

This fine deer was much sought after by hunters earlier in this century when hunting was still permitted in India. Today it continues to be a target of illegal hunting by poachers. The thick forests of national parks and sanctuaries are the last refuge of the Sambar which is increasingly threatened by the loss of habitat. Urgent efforts are necessary to save this magnificent Rusine deer. '

behind the curtains, her brown cheeks burning red with shame. Thin and reedlike, she almost wilted in anguish. She just hated it with a capital H when visitors came home and stared at *Didi*. At eleven, she didn't know what it was, but she wished *Didi* would be more like other girls.

Three years older than Neena, pale and fragile, 'Deeds' was confined to a wheelchair. Not only could she not walk, her head was tilted to one side and a little saliva always

Story: Vandna Khare Illustrations: Viky Arya

found its way down her cheek, like a perennial river. She had something else, too. Neena had heard Mom mention 'cerebral' something to the Auntie who had come today. Neena hated that aunt too, a horrid old lady, who didn't know better than to keep staring at Deeds, as though she were a Martian.

All along she had found nothing strange about her sister, assuming that all sisters were like that. That was until she went to school and found that other girls' sisters, espe-



cially of the older variety, were different. They could run, play, talk fluently, sing like larks, dance as gracefully as swans. In short, they could do everything a wide-eyed elevenyear-old could wish to do. And do it better too! Deeds went to school, but it was a special school. Perhaps there was something special about *Didi*.

That's what she thought until her friends started coming home.

In fact when she called her friends home she would proudly say, "Deeds attends a special school." That was till bullheaded Meeta asked, "Special for what?" and Neena was left floundering for a fitting reply.

"What is Deeds' school special for?" she asked Mom as soon as Meeta left.

"It's for people with special requirements."

"What special requirements?"

"Well, she needs special teachers to teach her stuff others learn on their own."

"Why can't she attend my school just like other girls' sisters do?" Neena persisted shrilly, in the fond hope that persistence might just change circumstances.

"Well, she does have special needs as you can see, Neena," answered Mom pursing her lips.

"But why, why can't she be more like everyone else?" Neena insisted, unwilling to let go.

"She is what she is, just like you are what you are, Neena!"

"I don't see why!"
Neena said storming out
of the room in anger.

"Well, you will, when you grow up," Mom said to her retreating back.

As she grew up, Neena gradually learnt to feel shame when her friends came over, or anyone stared too hard at her sister. In fact she stopped asking her friends over, preferring to go over to their place instead. That saved a lot of embarrassing questions on their part and mumbled replies on her part.

Then, one evening she found Meeta and her sister, Neha, locked in mortal combat over a pink pencil box. Meeta had Neha's hair in one fist while the other victoriously clutched the box in question. Neha, struggling

to get free, screamed, "Leave me or I'll tickle you—you know where!"

"Don't you even try,"
Meeta warned her, even
as her grasp on Neha's
mane broke under a
relentless tickle. With a
massive giggle she rolled
over, clutching the box
against her belly, coming
to a full stop at Neena's
feet.

"Oops, it's you," she pushed back a mop of muddy, unruly hair.
"Here—hold this while I teach *Didi* the lesson of her life."

"Try it," *Didi* threatened in retaliation. "I won't let you sleep in my room tonight."

"I don't care," Meeta gasped, too thrilled with her victory to think of the dangers lurking ahead of the ghostly kind.

"Why can't you two share anything amiably?" sighed Auntie making a belated entrance on the battle scene. "Hello, Neena! What do you and Vani do—do both of you also squabble like this over every box, pencil and paper?"

Neena shook her head. They almost never fought. She wouldn't even dream of eating a sweet all by herself without sharing it with Deeds; and engage in full fledged combat like this—God help her—she



couldn't even imagine such a life-threatening scenario. Gosh, Deeds wouldn't ever dream of taking anything from Neena.

In fact, being the apple of Dad's eye, Deeds often got better gifts when Dad returned from his monthly trips abroad. Last week Dad had presented her with a beautiful pen that had a digital clock in it. Within minutes Deeds had begged her to use it for her exams that day, promising her earnestly it would bring her luck. And it had! She had beaten the girls hollow in Science by ten whole marks!

Nor would Deeds consider spying on her the way Sita's elder sister did, rummaging through Sita's cupboard for clues to imaginary, untold deeds so that she could carry tales to her mother.

Thank God Deeds was her sister, not anyone else's. If only, she thought wistfully while returning home, if only she could run and play like the others, or speak clearly. At the very least, Neena kicked a stone angrily out of her way, all those people ought to know better than to stare so at her. There were so many 'ifs' in her life, she thought miserably.

A familiar figure in a wheelchair waited patiently for her return. Deeds' eyes lit up as Neena morosely climbed the three stairs to the verandah. Slowly she raised her bony white hands. Holding up a gorgeous golden basket that caught the deep red hues of the fading evening sun, she whispered hoarsely, "I made this for you."

Tears welled up in Neena's eyes and rolled down her cheeks. Deeds had worked painstakingly on it for months. Why, it must have been six months at least—often managing no more than a dozen loops a day—and she had toiled for her! Neena enveloped the frail figure in the wheelchair in her arms, mumbling fiercely to an astonished Deeds, "I don't care what others think, you are the best sister anyone can have."

And somehow she found, much to her own amazement, it really didn't matter—not any longer.



Apala Majumdar (12)

The last days were days of gradual realisation,

That something awaited me, Beyond that thin line I do not know. Whether it was eternal sleep or not, But something awaited me. A premonition aroused my drowsy heart, For the approaching coldness; I knew I was dead, When the first lash of cold fell on me, I cannot describe it. But a strange power, cold it was. Mysterious, I would rather say, Led me to a place Where there was nothing but vacuum alone.

I asked that power,
What it was?
She answered it was death.
Death,
Emptiness?
Yes,
Vacuum it was:
It was nothing but a whirlpool of air,

frost and mist,
I do not know where I stood,
But I stood,
Vacant as death itself
How long?
I do not know,
How many years I waited,
I lost count;
And suddenly, it all disappeared,
I was in a green field,
only green;
Something inside me urged me to walk,
And I walked.
There was light but there was no Sun,
And I walked on a path weary of trods

I reached nowhere but a plain,
Eternal,
Ethereal,
And beautiful;
It was bare,
It was barren,
But something inside me exclaimed,
Beautiful,'
And far beyond, I could see the Sun.
I waited for someone to lead me by the

hand. And take me back to my dear life, None did. I must say but one thing. The last days were so joyous, Every sweet memory came back to me, Every part of me was filled with joy, But when I realised I was dead, A strange fear overcame me. I did not want to lose what I had got, For I wanted to keep it. I was not afraid of being dead, But I was afraid of losing what I had got, I had longed to have a glance at my all, But death was too quick A terrible coldness. My evelids close. And the eyes of my soul open, I am myself without my body, A freer person I must say And the death I had so dreaded. Has become a part of me now,. And somehow. `I want it I do not want to leave it And go back to life. Death had endeared herself to me, More than life ever could, For she has roused inside me The love of the eternal and its strange beauty!



Story: Saibal Chakravarty Illustrations: Chitra Raju



ANU PAL, who taught the alphabet in the night school of Mouri, had two noticeable traits. He loved football and dreaded ghosts. He had played football when he was in school and now over forty. still maintained the same interest in the game. Then he believed that ghosts were everywhere—and felt particularly scared about one who visited him almost everyday.

The Mouri school was meant for boys who could not start schooling at the right age. Mostly they were children of farmers. Panu babu volunteered to run the school. He was single and did not have to take up a job as his father had left him a fruitgarden which brought him good return. Panu babu had a servant who looked after the garden and cooked his meals. Panu Pal also wrote poetry but had never had it published. He would read it out only to Raju Roy, the homeopath, his friend. Interestingly, Raju Roy who was a great striker during his youth, shared a common trait with his friend-both believed in ghosts. So whenever the two met, they discussed either ghosts or goals.

Debu's father was a carpenter. Debu was naughty no doubt. But he had one good quality. He drew well, especially cartoons. When Panu babu explained multiplication on the blackboard or spellings and other boys listened to him, Debu remained busy making sketches on his copy. The subject varied from a bullfight scene to a burly baboon. One day Debu was caught by Panu babu while he was busy drawing. Panu babu raised his hand in the air and warned, "While in class, mind, your work only and nothing else, I say."

Whenever Debu met Raju Rov. he felt excited because he had once been the hero of the football ground. Often he came to the night school to meet his old friend. One afternoon a nervous-looking Raju Roy rushed in to give a piece of bad news to his friend. As he was crossing the bamboo-bridge over the canal, he had heard a creaking sound behind but there had been no one on the bridge. Then a strong wind blew and someone had laughed loudly in the bamboo-grove. Raju babu was certain that a ghost was behind all this. He was so terrified that his

umbrella had flown out of his hand and fallen into the canal.

This only made Panu
Pal more glum than he
usually was. He whispered in his friend's ears
about the ghost that
haunted him everyday. A
shadowy figure with a
long beard and black
robes who came over
almost every evening. The
ghost kept on sitting on
the boundary-wall of his
garden.

As soon as he opened the garden gate, the creaking sound made him disappear.

"You better hurry home today," Raju Roy advised his friend. "These are very bad omens, you know. Uncanny footsteps, then the loud laugh in the bushes. You see the dark clouds. That's another bad sign!"

As the two friends remained engrossed in talking in a low voice, Debu watched them intently. Then he quietly walked up to the blackboard and picked up the white chalk. He sketched a few hasty strokes on the board and there was a picture of Panu babu looking scared as a rabbit with his hair standing on end and umbrella flying in the air! The boys were so amused that they burst



into suppressed laughter. This alerted Panu babu. He rushed into the classroom to find his cartoon on the blackboard and Debu still standing by it.

"You, you," Pal was so angry, he could hardly speak. "How dare you! Leave my class, I say—"

Debu felt so bad that he promptly picked up his books and came out of the class. Did he draw so badly that 'Sir' couldn't even smile? His Uncle Kalipada, history teacher of Mouri High School, was always all praise for him, whenever he browsed through his drawing-book.

"Someday you are going to make it big, Debu," he said, giving him a box of coloured pencils. "Keep it up my boy." In fact, he was the only soul who had ever spoken highly about his art.

Now outside the class, Debu's immediate problem was where to go at this time of the evening. He was walking aimlessly down the muddy path and wondering where he could pass an hour or so before returning home. It was too early to get back home. His father would suspect something was wrong and might drag him back to school. All his friends were in school, so there was no point in visiting their houses either.

Something suddenly flashed in Debu's mind. He remembered Panu babu's description of the ghost with the white beard, ogling at him from the wall as if it wanted to know if Panu babu had change for a ten-rupee note. Debu had heard the description so many times that it flashed across his mind like a picture. Why not go to 'Sir's' house and have a look? He would not get back till 8 p.m. So he could just have a look all by himself. Debu walked briskly towards 'Sir's' house to get there before 'Sir' did.

But he was wrong. Panu babu was so worked up after hearing Raju babu's story that he decided to get back home early. Debu, making his way through thick bushes towards Panu babu's house, little knew that he was being followed by someone more dreadful than a ghost. He could now see the tiled roof of Panu babu's house amidst mango and palm trees. Just outside the gate when he was about to call out to Bhola, somebody suddenly grabbed his neck from behind.

A startled Debu turned back and found Panu Sir clearching his teeth, "So year paye come here, naughty fellow. Thought this would be a nice hiding place, eh?"

Taken aback, Debu pointed to one side of the wall and cried, "Sir, look."

Panu Pal turned, looked in the direction and the next moment he fainted and fell on the ground.

What else could he do because as he turned his head, he found the ghost with the white beard at exactly the same spot where it had been seated on all days of the week. Debu realised Panu babu's fainting called for quick action.

"Bhola, Bhola," he cried

loudly. "Look after Sir," he told the plump servant as he came out of the cottage with a lantern in hand. "I will get that fellow. It can't be a ghost. I have seen him smoking a 'Bidi'," he mused as he rushed towards the dark and dreaded spot.

Bhola quickly brought an earthen jug and sprinkled water on his master's face. A couple of minutes of this operation made Panu babu open his eyes and mumble, "Is it still there? I mean the ghogho-gho-"

"It's not there, Sir," Debu, who was now back, quipped, "but it's very much here." He pointed to a lanky, middle-aged man standing a few feet away and looking as ashamed as a boy who has come to the class without doing his homework. A tattered silky robe and a beard made of jute were lying on the ground. Panu babu looked at him with enquiring eyes. Did his face appear familiar? He wasn't too sure.

"You know him, Sir,"
Debu quickly dispelled his
doubts. "He is Jatai Pal,
the man who wears all
kinds of disguises to
amuse people. He is a big
draw in the annual fair,
you know."

"What business does he have here?" thundered Panu Pal. "Does he not know that I am scared to death? ... At least I am not amused in any way with his fancy dresses."

"He is sorry for that, Sir," Debu pleaded for Jatai who preferred to keep quiet. "He never meant any harm."

It appeared that Debu had talked over the matter with Jatai in the few minutes that Panu babu had been lying unconscious. Then he explained that Jatai had never wanted to scare the teacher who had taken teaching as a mission. Actually he

was very eager to learn reading, seeing that his cousin Hari was progressing steadily in the night school. But he felt ashamed to approach the teacher straightway, because he thought he was much too grown-up to start learning. He figured it might be the right thing to come to him in disguise and that too in the dark, so that others may not know who he was. He did not have the least idea that it would scare the teacher in such a way.

As Debu concluded, Panu Pal, who now stood tall, frowned at Jatai, who promptly nodded conveying that what Debu was telling was nothing but the truth.

'Ah,' Panu babu felt as relaxed as if he had been offered a cool glass of lassi in the midst of the Sahara desert. But he did not want to elaborate on how silly it was of him to get scared for no reason. Rather he encouraged Jatai to start learning for which it is never too late.

"Since you do not want to sit with the boys," Panu Pal stepped forward, 'why don't you come to my place in the morning? But not in fancy dress, I warn you."

'Fancy or fearful,' wondered Debu, hiding a

smile.

"I will see that you are ahead of the boys soon," Panu babu assured Jatai. "Will that be all right?"

"Yes, Sir," Jatai opened his mouth for the first time.

"It's settled then," Panu babu picked up his cane from the ground. "So from tomorrow I will expect you," he looked at Jatai who quickly nodded.

As Jatai and Debu were leaving, both being in a hurry to reach home because it was already eight o'clock, Debu suddenly felt a pull on his shirt from behind. Was it a ghost this time? No, it was 'Sir' again. 'Now or never,' Debu thought. He was going to punish him for that cartoon on the blackboard. There is no escape, he thought.

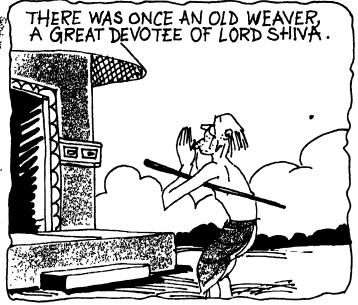
"May I tell you," Sir searched for words with a smile on his lips, "what you did today was very smart..."

"You mean solving the mystery of the ghost on the boundary-wall Sir?" asked Debu.

"No, no!" Sir started giggling as if he was watching a Mickey Mouse movie. "I mean, that cartoon on the blackboard." His smile now broadened into a grin. "That was superb, I say."



STORY RETOLD BY SHANKAR ILLUSTRATED BY: WARMA-



OH, LORD, I VE BEEN PRAYING
TO YOU FOR THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE
YEARS TO GIVE ME ENOUGH
MONEY TO LIVE COMFORTABLY
I COME TO THIS TEMPLE TWICE A
DAY AND WALK ROUND I ...



A HUNDRED AND ONE TIMES. WHEN WILL YOU HEED MY PRAYERS, LORD?



BROTHER, WHY DO YOU TORTURE YOURSELF THUS? YOU DON'T KEEP WELL THESE DAYS AND FIND IT DIFFICULT TO MAKE THE PRADA-KSHINA TWICE A DAY. THE LORD DOESN'T GRANT YOU YOUR WISH EITHER.



NO, BROTHER,
I'M SURE THE
LORD WILL
ANSWER MY PRAYERS HE WILL
TAKE CARE OF
ME. I HAVE
FAITH IN HIM.







UCH! Don't pull it so hard!" I clutched at my

"Serves you right! Go tattling to mother, will you!" Shanti, who was combing my knee-length hair, yanked it again.

Shanti called me Rapunzel when she was in a good mood, but that day she certainly was not in one.

"Aaah! I didn't tell her anything! She must have heard you ordering me not to enter your room when your giggly friends were around!" I protested.

"Oh, I know you all right! You only need half a chance to go squealing to mother!" She gouged my scalp with the comb, making me cry out.

"That is enough! I don't want you to do my hair!" I pulled free and ran into my room, my throat aching with unshed tears. I rarely, if ever, tell tales and that day I certainly hadn't. So there!

As I sat glumly, I hated my hair, which was the envy of all my friends. I cheartily wished I had short hair that only required a light brush. Mother wouldn't hear of 2 cutting my hair. But hard pressed s she was for time, she had gladly given



up the task of caring for it to Shanti, who at 17, was nearly six years my se nior. And she did an excellent job, combing it the way I liked, without a single strand out of place.

It dawned on me only recently that she used it to settle scores with me for things I had done or those she imagined I had. It went something like this:

"Do you have to practise your singing when I study? You know it distanturbs me!"—Yank!!

"Can't you keep your mouth shut in front of my friends, without exposing your ignorance! I could die of shame!"—Pull! Yank!

Come to think of it, she had not changed much since the time we were younger. I still remember the time she tried to feed me chillies when I was a toddler, telling me they were sweets...Or the time she called, "Come fast! I have something to show you!" When I ran to see the surprise, she rolled up her eyelashes, exposing the pinks, stuck out her tongue and let out a terrifying roar. I used to run to hide somewhere, anywhere...under the bed, in the bathroom...

Then the time she announced, "There is an

ogre in that tree over there. He has TWO eyes, ONE nose and TWO ears." In my terror, I would imagine a monster with weird features and scream. At such times, Shanti smiled in satisfaction and sometimes even laughed.

No, things had not changed. Only now she had my hair to torture me with.

Oh, why couldn't Shanti be like the sisters of my friends, who doted on them and loved them? I was still brooding when I heard the door open. "Come let me Anish it!".
It was Shanti.

"No, I will do it myself!" I struggled some more, but the hair got tangled the more I undid the tangles. I threw down the comb in frustration and promptly burst into tears.

Shanti picked it up and quietly finished plaiting the hair. "I did not mean to make you cry, da!" she said softly.

Something in her voice made me whirl round and I was surprised to see a look of...of...love. Or could it be? I smiled tremulously and the magic of the

moment vanished...

That night I woke up suddenly. I needed to go to the toilet urgently. I tried to go back to sleep but could not. And there was no way I would go to the toilet alone. It is a secret, but I am scared of the dark passage that led from our room. I imagined every kind of apparition following me whenever I had to pass it. I was in a quandary. Should I wake up Shanti? What if she refused to come with me? Or scolded me for waking her up? Or made fun of my fears? I squirmed. Finally I went across to her bed and touched her shoulder, lightly, fully expecting one of my imagined responses. But she woke up instantly.

"What is it, Jyoti? Want to go to the loo?"

"Ye..s I'm...."

"Come, I'll go with you!"
Not only did she not say
anything then, she did not
mention it the next morning either. Frankly, I
could not make out
Shanti. Did she love me or
hate me? Not that my
feelings for her were any
clearer. I loved her, ad
mired her brains, her

The other day, I was sitting on the banyan tree

in the park near my house, sulking hard. (Don't ask me how one can sulk hard; I do!) My ears perked up when I heard Shanti's name.

"That Shanti is too much. You should have seen her pretending to be a champion swimmer to get into the good books of \$\mathbb{\x}\$

Bobby, the star athlete of our school!"

"Oh, yes! And Miss Clever solved a problem the other day and had the brain of the class, Ajay, eating out of her hand," said another.

"She even curries favour with the teachers, working extra hard..."



I looked down. At least two of the girls were socalled friends of Shanti. I was furious. They had not seen me since I was hidden by the foliage. I jumped down.

"Don't you dare say another word about my sister!" I said fiercely. "It is not her fault that silly boys fall all over themselves to make friends with her. She can't help being beautiful or clever and she has better things to do than run after stupid boys. Why, she may be going abroad for her studies!"

I myself was surprised to find I was defending Shanti so staunchly and the girls were embarrassed. They tried to laugh it off awkwardly as I stomped off.

"Hey, Rapunzel! I'm going away!" Shanti waved a letter, when I entered the house, still angry.

"Going? Where?" I echoed stupidly.

"To California! I have been admitted to the college there!" she said happily.

Shanti, going away?
Shouldn't I feel happy
that she was going away?
But curiously I felt sick in
the pit of my stomach.

Things changed after

that. Nothing definite, but there was some change. I often caught her with the same tender look. One day while plaiting my hair she said, "Now you can cut your hair, no one will stop you!"

"But I won't!" I protested. Somehow, I felt that keeping my hair long was very important—to feel close to her.

A few days later she turned some of her prized possessions over to me. Her sports bike, her favourite pillow; even her stuffed panda. And I gave her the best shell from my collection. I wanted to tell her that I loved her, but was afraid to do so for fear of being laughed at. I thought she wanted to tell me something too, but didn't know how. I helped her buy stuff for her trip and then pack up.

And then it was the day before her departure. I did

dinner. I felt miserable. When I was changing into my pyjamas that night, Shanti came and sat on the bed.

"I'm going to miss you, though you have been a pest!" she said.

"I haven't..." I turned round to find her eyes twinkling. I started laughing. She joined in, pulling me down on the bed. Soon we were rolling on the bed in our mirth. I don't know when we began crying but we were both sobbing in a while.

"I wish you weren't going away," I sobbed.

"I don't hate you either, even though you think I do," said Shanti.

We then began talking and couldn't stop. After all there was twelve years of matters to catch up with and the time was so short. I wished I could hold on to the time and to my newly discovered sister...



Books for all Seasons. Books for Right Reasons

THE MISSING PARENTS MYSTERY by Ashok Banker Illustrated by Geeta Vadhera Puffin Books 1994 Price Rs. 50

The story is all about an 11-year-old boy, Jay Divecha, whose parents go missing, and how he, with his newly made friend Ritu, solves the mystery.

However, the author seems to forget the main theme and goes off into a lot of irrelevent details including an awkward attempt at sex education and the blossoming of young love. There is little sensitivity in the attempt, though. It is only in the sixth chapter that the actual mystery unfolds.

There are more bloomers. Jay's friend, Ritu, another 11-year-old, uses some of the foulest language like 'rheumatic rhinoceros' and 'I'll make kheema-mutter out of you', while addressing the

principal Mr. Francis. And he, for his part, enormously enjoys her outburst and calls her a 'firebrand' and compares her indulgently with her mother, who had been an equally tempestuous girl in her days. Perhaps the author thought such dialogues would be amusing to the reader, but they are in very bad taste and certainly unsuitable for young, impressionable readers.

The only thing that comes to mind as regards it's plus points is that this is a realistic story, the situations and characters, all near life-like.

There are several questions one would like to ask the author. Like why does a school boy have to carry a 'briefcase', or why can he not take a bus or taxi home, or why hasn't he got an extra key to the house. Also, why does he have to use prose that is sure to drive the

reader to the dictionary eg. "...she had a tendency to spout out whole rivers of diatribe".

Towards the end there is action. No, the readers don't experience any of it by reading it as it happens. They get it from the characters—Krishan Mohanani, Jay's parents and the CID Inspector in their words. Whatever little thrill is there, is thus effectively lost.

Oh, and the contents page. It is one of the most hilarious I have seen! There are no chapter headings but it says 'one', 'two' etc. and gives the page numbers, thus "one..1", "nine...9" and so on. What is the big idea?

The illustrations are barely adequate. The cover is a let down.

The book may only interest those who go by the blurb and even then it may prove a big disappointment.

Thangamani

The Ghostly Tale & Other Stories
By Members of AWIC
Illustrated by
Jagdish Joshi
Madhuban Eductional
Books
Vikas Publishing
House Pvt. Ltd. 1995
Price Rs. 20/-

Long live the short story! There are so many aspects you can deal with through it. You can make readers laugh, cry, think, change, be amused or angry, or feel proud through just a few pages of a short story. This collection of ten stories, some of them prize-winning have all these elements.

The Ghostly Tale is a story within a story—so there should be doubled "ghostly" fear. Instead you find a young girl emerging the heroine. The Defeated *Hero* is actually the winner, because he believes in fair play. The Mystery of the Missing Goats, has a two-legged panther terrorising goats. Whereas Bunty's Fancy Dress Party attracts the strangest of guests. Rohit learns his lesson in The catapult and so realistic is the telling of Our Travelling Friend that you almost feel you are undertaking the journey with Chhottu and

her Didi. Only you wish the editor had been more alert and not let sentences like "having gotten her way" slip past the editor's anvil. Also in A Change of Profession, you cannot help pausing at sentences like "...the guest-room overflowed with crumbled balls of paper," because you know that walls and cookies crumble but when it comes to paper you crumple it. You also wonder at the Miss World/ Universe descriptions of beauty in The Challenge and the Choice. A romance story set in 190 A.D.—just when you begin to admire the spirited and bold Adi for her qualities of head and heart, there comes a Hindi film-like description of—"A svelte beauty with big, black eyes, chiselled features, long wavy hair and a beautiful figure".

Who is Baba is a delightful story with a situation straight out of just about anybody's home, and one cannot help but feel that this story would be better suited to a picture-book with lots of colourful illustrations.

The last story The Kathigarh Thieves is a bit laboured and long drawn out for an adventure story. But then, variety is

the spice of a short story collection and at Rs. 20/this one is really quite affordable.

Vaijayanti Tonpe

Snip, Snip, Snip &
Stories
By Members of AWIC
Illustrated by
Tapas Guha
Published by
Madhuban Educational
Books
Vikas Publishing
House Pvt. Ltd. 1995
Price: Rs.20.00

A yen for fame, the feeling of defiance, consideration for another's feelings, a sense of mischief, the joyful release in laughter....these are just some of the emotions portrayed in the collection of stories under review. The preface to the book says that the 14 stories in this compilation are real they actually took place. You can, therefore, identify yourself in some situations and empathise with the characters in others.

Whilst all the stories in this book are not of the same quality, the outstanding ones more than makes up for the others.

Name and Fame, Snip, Snip, Snip, Snip, The Skilful Hunter, and The March Past are some stories that shine with their superior

narration and better content.

In the opening story
Name and Fame by
Thangam Krishnan,
Mohan's ingenuous aspirations to fame and glory
make him add on the
names of all whom he
admires to his own. This
results in a hilarious
situation, making Mohan
realise his dream.

Maya's long hair in Madhavi S. Mahadevan's Snip, Snip, Snip, is the bane of her life but her mother's pride. She will not even hear of Maya having her hair cut. One day when her mother is out, Maya takes the scissors to her hair, the result of which is reflected at times in the "sad and hurt" expression in her mother's eyes.

Jaya Paramsivan's The Skilful Hunter is Nawab Hansraj's falcon, Kinju. The bird's bid to prevent his master from drinking poisoned water is misunderstood. Kinju loses his life; Nawab Hansraj can only rue his anger.

The March Past by
Jayashree Kurup is a
story in lighter vein.
Minnie dreads march
pasts because try as she
might, her right arm
moves forward with her
right leg and the left arm
th the left leg. There-

fore, when she has to take the place of an ill classmate in the annual march past competition at school, her nervousness is justified. But with practice and encouragement Minne's class wins the competition. They have to then march up to the chief guest and accept the trophy. That is when Minnie misses a step...

Snip, Snip, Snip and Other Stories is worth a read; it is more interesting than the cover may lead you to believe.

Tamasha: Health, Environment and Story Fun Book

Tamasha is a magazine for young readers that has been around for five years now. "Tamasha: is a Health, Environment and Story Fun Book"—that is how its publishers describe the magazine. A quarterly, Tamasha is full of bright, colourful illustrations of simple, meaningful stories, poems and games, Tamasha aims to educate its young readers about issues that are important to them, in as lucid a way as possible apart from entertaining them. For a copy, priced at Rs. 15/-, write to:

Building Centre, Sarai Kale Khan, Nizamuddin East, New Delhi 110003. The Three R'S
ABC... Naturally!
Mamata Pandya;
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Shailesh Bhalani;
Cover illustration:
Puransinh Jhala;
Illustrations: The
students of Anandalaya
School, Anand,
Gujarat;

Mamata Pandya
Design, Layouts and
Artworks: Shailesh
Bhalani;
Illustrations: Vijay
Shrimali;

Forest Tales
Meena Raghunathan
and Mamata Pandya
Design and Layout:
Shailesh Bhalani and
Mukesh Panchal;
Colour visuals and
Illustrations: Mukesh
Panchal and Vijay
Shrimali;

Puzzling Out Pollution;
Meen. Raghunathan
and Mamata Pandya;
Design and Layouts:
Mukesh Barad, Sunil
Jacob, Mamata Pandya
Illustrations Mukesh
Barad, Sanskriti R.
Menon, Vijay Shrimali,
Wilson Solanki;
All from
Centre for Environment Education (CEE),
India, for South Asia

B.N.

Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP); 1994;

These four books form part of a series on environment and related themes, targeted specifically at children.

Our planet is getting polluted in every way. The present rates of economic growth and consumption are such that natural ecosystems are unable to handle the waste that is being churned out. Biodiversity is adversely affected. There are problems of salinity and loss of nutrients from the soil. All sorts of epidemics are staging a comeback. The recent plague at Surat is a terrifying indication of the shape of things to come.

So it is imperative that all of us are made more conscious about the environment and its preservation for the future generations. One way to bring this about is to begin at the level of children, since adults over the generations have already made a mess of it. For example, as of now, we have an environment protection legislation in India, but no green taxes on polluters. But such taxes may be possible when the children of today become adults who take policy decisions.

It is of course true that there is greater consciousness about the environment in the West than in India. To a large extent. this has come about not because trade and industry have suddenly become conscious of environmental degradation. The change has primarily come about because of a green movement that has taken root amongst consumers. It stands to reason that in India too. we must foster such environment-conscious consumers who will, for example, demand ecofriendly marks and not purchase products that have packaging that can not be recycled or is not biodegradable.

It is with this objective that these books have been developed and produced by the CEE. A national institute supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Government of India, and affiliated to the Nehru Foundation for Development, CEE develops and field-tests innovative programmes and materials to create environmental awareness. This series of books was commissioned by SACEP, an inter-government organisation of nine South

Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) established in 1982. The only institution of its kind in South Asia, SACEP formulates and implements environmental projects and programmes on the basis of regional cooperation.

Slick production on glossy paper, with quaint but lovely pictures, these four books are one of a kind.

Let us begin at the very beginning. ABC.... Naturally!

This says that the usual alphabet we learn does not bear any relationship to the world around us, and so offers us an alphabet of "What we must care for, whether big or small". A is not just for Apple, but rather, for Atmosphere, Air, Animals and so on. B is not so much for Ball or Bad, but Biosphere, Biodiversity and Birds.

The book has two
passages on planet
Earth and its resources,
pointing out that some
of its resources are
exhaustible and therefore
should not be taken for
granted. It exhorts at the
end, also put forward

alphabetically: "Act, Begin, Conserve...Yet while there's time, zoom into a brighter future!"

Some of the illustrations are not in colour, but in outlines. The book says that this is so that readers can colour them for themselves and thus participate in the making of the book. Apart from appealing to the artist in us, it also appeals to the poet. It teaches us how to write the French poetic form Cinquain and the Japanese Haiku. The book also contains information about youngsters who illustrated the book.

The trouble with this book is that the rhymes and the poetry are rather contrived. Take for example, "M fills the world with mysteries and marvels, Microscopic to mammoth, all ours to unravel". Besides, the alphabet, after all, is associated with very small children. Such children are not likely to know words like "kaleidoscope" (spelt wrongly in the book) or "demolish" or "oikos". And for older children, those who know such words, what is the point of an alphabet book?

Now let's take up Where's Away? This book is written from the point

of view of a bug which gets bugged at the sight of litter and so is styled Litterbug. He has a friend, a worm who worries about various things and so is called Worryworm. Together, they set out on a door-todoor trail of waste material and to where it is thrown "away". A cockroach, an army of ants and two earthworms help them realise that the answer to the problem of accumulating waste material is to "Recycle, Reuse, and Reduce" it. Litterbug and Worryworm make this their "3R pact" and ask the readers to join it, too. That is the way to a "litter-free world".

The book provides some ideas as to how the 3Rpact can be put into practice. An empty bottle of eye-drops with a dropper can be converted into a bird, a used tooth-brush into a hog. Then there is a puzzle for the brain, followed by instructions about surveying home garbage and making a compost pit. The book also provides information about land-filling, recycling paper, aluminium and plastic. Then the readers are told about packaging and asked to

conduct their own market survey of packaging.
There is an appeal to the creative faculties as well: suggestions to make an adventure story out of the travails of a newspaper or a tin can. The book ends with further food for thought and a warning: There really is no "away", all litter comes back to us.

This book is the most topical of the four, especially as the disposal of industrial and domestic waste has become a major threat to the environment all over the world. It rightly stresses the importance of recycling waste and also recognises that the process has its limitations. Recycling and reusing must be supplemented with reducing.

However, it fails to point out that sometimes, waste disposal projects, even when they are set up, may fail as business propositions. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi had set up a waste composting plant in Okhla in 1981 and this made such heavy losses that it was shut down in 1992. The MCD had set up a waste incinerator-cumpower generation plant at the dumping site of Timarpur. Because of the low calorific value of

Delhi's garbage, this too could not be cost-effective and had to be closed.

Another aspect that has not been dealt with adequately in this book is the health hazard to the workers who handle waste. This has been examined, for example, by the Forum for Environmental Concern, Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, Bombay. Around Delhi too, in Jawalapuri, say, where there are 80 plastic recycling units heating plastic, fire is a major occupational hazard. In Loha Mandi, labourers loading and unloading trucks of scrap iron, are exposed to the risks of tetanus. Apart from this, there are no proper rules and regulations about such workers. and no welfare schemes. The dealers pay arbitrary daily or weekly wages and make high profits, while actual rag-pickers and sorters live the lives of slaves. It is an attractive business proposition to be a kabariwallah. So much so, that junk is even being imported (7.8 million kg from the USA and 7.8 million kg from Australia) and leading to good profits for brokers! But is this not going to convert India into a vast dumping-ground for

the world's tin cans and plastic containers? And this suggests a very crucial question. In case of matters as serious as this, is the light-hearted and flippant tone in the whole book justified? The presumption is that while the rag-picking children ferret among the garbage dumps, quite another "class" of children require a detective story for garbage to be made interesting to them. Are the "haves" among children really so blind and deaf to the realities around them? Or, is it just the adults who think so?

Incidentally, in this book, the cockroach "La Cucaracha" speaks in riddles and rhymes and the rhymes are far better than the ones in the alphabet book.

Turning to Forest Tales, this contains seven stories. folk-tales from Bhutan. Tibet, Sri Lanka, as well as original stories and real-life incidents and a biographical sketch of St. Barbe Baker, the noted conservationist and humanist. There are also some fun ideas: to paint oneself a tiger, to make an elephant mask, to make shadow-puppets, to estimate the heights and the girth of a tree, to take

prints of barks and leaves, and to grow a tree. There is also some additional information on forests.

The fourth one, Puzzling Out Pollution, begins by spelling out what pollution is, and traces out how it has increased over the years. It analyses the components of different kinds of pollution, namely, air pollution, water pollution, radiation pollution, thermal pollution, noise pollution and solid waste. It then discusses the effects of pollution, illustrating the points with cases of gradual damage like that of the Taj, and of sudden disasters like the Minamata story of 1953, the Amoco Cadis split in 1978, the Bhopal tragedy of 1984, the Chernobyl blast of 1986, and so on. Plus, there are exercises for the readers. Suggested experiments with glass dishes and petroleum jelly, oil and feathers, a two-page full-colour picture in which one has to spot the sources of pollution, a smaller blackand-white one, a couple of mazes, puzzles where words have to be decoded and spotted, and yet again a full-colour two-page counter-and-die game. There is also a Pollution IQ test. Packed in, is a lot

of extra information, about the Greenhouse Effect, the Ozone Hole, or decibel levels of sound sources. Then there are concrete suggestions towards solving the problem of pollution.

Rather strangely, the book is probably targeted at the teenager. But the mazes are ones that can be done by a child of five. without too much of an effort. And there is one place where the book is plain sloppy. Let us take this quote from page 29. "Sound intensity is measured on a scale of values called a decibel (dB) scale. On this scale, each 10 dB rise indicates a ten-fold increase in sound pressure. Thus the rise in sound intensity on the ear from 10 dB to 20 dB represents a hundred-fold increase in sound level." This is simply not correct. The rise in sound intensity has to be from 1 dB to 20 dB for there to be a hundred-fold increase.

The tone of this book too is unnecessarily frivolous at times. It is a clever idea to name the particulates in the air "The PT gang", or to have Carbon Monoxide say "Heh, heh! Those PTs think they're so tough! I'm carbon monoxide, but I go by the name of Sneak." But would the kid who rummages through rubbish with a gunny bag over his shoulder, or who sits within the confines of a fireworks factory, have found what he inhales such smart and amusing company?

There is a lot of repetition across the four books. Even though they are said to form a series, all four are not necessary together for the reader to get the whole picture. In other words, the material in the books could have been better organised.

The best part of the books are the pictures, which are superb, especially in Where's Away? And as has been mentioned earlier, the quality of the paper used is excellent.

But one wishes that the proof-reading had been more careful. In *Puzzling Out Pollution*, one has 'exp;loding' instead of 'exploding' (p.7) and 'te' instead of 'the' (p.45). In

Where's Away, one has aluminum instead of aluminium or aluminum (p.18) and a full stop is missing after a sentence on p. 10. These are just a few examples which should not have occurred in such expert productions.

All said and done, the series does drive home the point that the 3 R's (Recvcle, Reuse and Reduce) are as important today as the other 3 R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). The recent Literacy Drive in India will really remain incomplete if it is not coupled with education about the environment. Perhaps a rendering of these books in regional (and simpler) languages of different South Asian countries may help in this context.

What about the children themselves? After all, they are, in parts, the illustrators of ABC ...

Naturally! And their active participation in saving the environment is what the series really is calling for.

Dipavali Debroy

PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

GIRLS

7055 Miselta Rodrique (12) St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani 412805 Maharashtra, India Dancing, singing U.K., India

7056 Neha Mathur (13) 91-B, Pocket A Sukhdev Vihar New Delhi 110025, India Basketball, pen-friends Any country

7057 Anupama Chhabra (15) 777 Baba Kharak Singh Marg New Delhi 110001, India Swimming, music Any country 7058

Zenab Fatima (14) D-13, Nizamuddin West New Delhi 110013, India Reading, playing U.K., U.S.A.

7059
R.G. Sangeetha (14)
No. 1123, 37th 'A' Cross
11th Main, 4th 'T' Block
Jayanagar, Bangalore
Karnataka, India
Singing, dancing
Any country

7060 Nisha V. (13) Nishath, VP 1/100 House No. 26 Kamala Gardens Perurkada 695005 Thiruvananthapuram

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GIRLS

Kerala, India Singing, reading Any country

7061
Abhilasha R. (15)
Roll No. 2801
Tagore House
Sainik School
Kazhakootam 695585
Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala, India Reading, stamps Any country

7062

Sanchita Banerjee (14) c/o Sukumar Banerjee CFRI Post FRI Dist. Dhanbad 828108 Bihar, India Sports, photography Any country

7063
Chandra (15)
Wamrong Junior High
School
P.O. Wamrong
Eastern Bhutan, Bhutan
Collecting cards,
pen-friends
Any country

7064
Ambika (15)
Wamrong Junior High
School
P.O. Wamrong
Eastern Bhutan, Bhutan
Collecting stickers,
pen-friends
Any country

7065 Kavita Puri (14) A-434 Naraina Industrial Area, Phase 1 New Delhi 110028, India Making friends Any country

7066 Neeru Mehta (16) S-2/168 Old Mahavir Nagar New Delhi 110018 Making friends, swimming India 7067

Tshering Jhanio (15)
Wamrong Junior High
School
P.O. Wamrong
Eastern Bhutai
Collecting posters, music
Any Country
7068

Shobha Manali (16) DG III/80 Vikaspuri New Delhi 110018, India Making friends, movies Any country

-7069
Tarleen Kaur (15)
AE/15, Tagore Garden
New Delhi 110027, India
Reading, stickers
Any country

7070 Joshita Khurana (9) J-52 Ashok Vihar, Phase I New Delhi 110052, India Judo, music New Zealand, Italy

7071
Namgay Chhoden (9)
Class IV,
Tsapey Primary
School, HAA

Reading, making friends
Japan, India
7072
Ruby Bagga (12)
c/o Embassy of India
Bonn (Germany)
c/o Ministry of External
Affairs
New Delhi 110011, India
Music, reading
Any country

Bhutan

7073
Rinku M. Shetty (14)
29, 3rd Cross
Victoria Layout
Bangalore 560047
Karnataka, India
Swimming, basketball
Any country

7074
Esha Verma (13)
c/o Lt. Col. S.K. Verma
Sainik School
P.O. Rajapara, Goalpara
Assam, India
Drawing, stamps & coins
U.S.A., Japan

7075
Vidy, Hari (13)
Thoppil Veedu
Kolayakode,
Kallopully P.O.
Palakkad
Kerala, India
Stamps, reading
Australia, Japan

7076 Priyamvada A. Loke (15) 311 Madhav Niwas N.R. Karode Marg Borivli (W),

CHILDREN'S WORLD JANUARY 1995

GIRLS

Bombay 400092 Maharashtra, India Reading, acting Switzerland, U.S.A

7077 Sharina Bhatia (13) 879 Sector 14, Sonipat Haryana, India Reading, dance

Switzerland, Thailand

7078

Ruchi Anand (13) KGI/496 Vikaspuri New Delhi 110018, India Stamps, & coins U.S.A., Switzerland

7079
Mitul S. Mehta (14)
Sunder Niwas
11/12 Diwanpara
Rajkot 360001, Gujarat
Stamps
India

7080 Kezar

Kezang Choden (12)
Lonphula Primary School
P. O. Youghula
Eastern Bhutan
Movies, pen-friends
Any country

7081

Sangeeta (9) c/o Mr. M.R. Bhuyel

Tshimalakha
General Hospital
Chukha, Bhutan
Gardening, music
India, Hongkong

7082

Henna (16) Class IX D, M.H.S. State Thimphu Bhutan

Pen-friends, reading

India

7083 Anubhuti (12) 24/A-1 Heera Nagar Patiala 147001 Punjab, India Writing, reading India, U.S.A.

7084

Gaurav Sharma (13) 124 Charan Bagh Patiala 147001 Punjab, India Music, dancing U.S.A., U.K.

7085

Summer Bhullar (11) 73, Sector 2-B Chandigarh, India Reading, swimming U.S.A., Canada

7086

Tshewing Nima (11)
Kangpara Primary School
Class VI
P.O. Tshemshing
Dist. Tashiganj, Bhutan
Reading, singing

7087

France, Italy

Pushpinder (13)
45 Khalsa College Colony
Patiala 147001
Punjab, India
Collecting cards, dancing
India, U.K.

7088

Surabhi Mukherjee (14)

c/o Shefali Mukherjee Class IX (JM) Central Braille Press Rajpur Road Dehra Dun 248001 U.P., India Making pen-friends, writing letters Any country

7089
Farah Moin (16)
H.No. 2-3-129 (297-A)
Nallagutta
Secunderabad 500003
Andhra Pradesh, India
Writing, collecting cards
Any country

7090 Meraj Fatima (8) 2-3-129 (297-A) 1st Floor Nallagutta Secunderabad 500003 Andhra Pradesh, India

Stamps India, U.S.A.

7091
Stuti Banerjee (12)
D/4 Eucress Building
1st Floor
Wadala East
Bombay 400037, India
Tap dancing, reading
Switzerland, Thailand

7092 Anuja Kotasthane (11) B-29 Navjeevan Society Dahej Bypass Road Bharuch 392001 Gujarat, India

Drawing, reading Any country

7093
Subhajit Paul (8)
Plot No.148 RR Colony
Near Puja Mandav
Umpling-6, Shillong
Meghalaya, India
Cricket, football
Any country

7094
Asif Jafar (16)
c/o Mr. Jafar Hussain Khan
Peerpur House,
8 Tilak Marg
Lucknow 226001, U.P.
India
Pen-friends, computer
programming
Any country

7095
Debanjan Sarkar (11)
c/o Mr. A.K. Sarkar
(E.D.O.) P.O. Nafra
Via Bomdila Dist.
West Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Stamp & sticker collection
Japan, U.S.A.

7096
Angshuman Purohit (12)
c/o Mr. J. Panigrahee
(Teacher)
Municipal Gandhi School
At/P.O. Rajgangpur
Dist. Sundergarh
Orissa 770017
Stamps & coins
India

7097
Jacky Dancer (13)
V.K.V. Niausa, P.O. Niausa
Dist. Tirap
Arunachal Pradesh

India Reading, playing Any country

7098

Any country

Jaito Pausa (12)
V.K.V. Niausa
P.O. Niausa, Dist. Tirap
Arunachal Pradesh
India
Reading, singing

7099
Kinzang Peidon (12)
Yomphula Primary School
P.O. Kangling
Dist. Tashigang, I tan
Pen-friends, music
Any country

7100
Joyboy (16)
c/o Mr. B.N. Adhikari
Kharida, Rajgram
P.O. Kharagpur
West Bengal 721301, India
Making friends, travelling
Any country

7101
A. Kavin Kumar (14)
s/o Mr. M. Algarsomy
Plot 5 Ramakrishna Nagar
Siluvathur Road
Dindigul 624005
Tamil Nadu, India
Oratory, making friends
Any country

7102
P. Murali (15)
No. 1, South Canal Bank
Road
Mandaveli, Madras 600028
Tamil Nadu, India

Letter writting, reading Any country

7103 Karan Harjai (16) G 21/2 Rajouri Garden New Delhi 110027, India Movies, making friends Any country

7104
S. Harsha (7)
s/o Geetha Srihari
Gammon Colony
P.O. Belagula,
Dist. Mandya
Karnataka 571606, India
Stamps, painting
Any country

7105 S. Deepak (10) s/o Geetha Srihari Gammon Colony P.O. Belagula, Dist. Mandya Karnataka 571606, India Reading, painting Any country

7106
Cdt. C.K. Nayak (Arup) (15)
Class X-A, Sutlej House
Sainik School
Bhubaneswar,
Dist Khorda 751005
Orissa, India
Pen-friends, martial arts
Any country

7107 Rohan Jayaraj (13) Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala^{*} Yadavgiri, Mysore 570020 Karnataka

M/s Orient Cement Stamps, playing the 7113 mandolin Rajesh Taneja Montoo (15) **Devapur Cement Works Adilabad Dist** India B-3-81 Safdarjang Enclave Andhra Pradesh 504218 New Delhi 110029, India 7108 Pen-friends, reading India Bharadwaj Gogoi (13) Pen-friends, chess Any country Class VII, Sec. B Any country Roll No. 3165, Sainik School 7114 7119 Goalpara, P.O. Rajapara Achal Agarwal (16) Tarik Badruddin (16) G-82 Ashok Vihar Phase I Dist. Goalpara Lawrence School Assam 783133, India New Delhi 110052, India Vindhya House Karate, stamps Tennis, music Sanawar, Dist. Solan Any country Any country Himachal Pradesh 173202 7109 7115 India M. Dilshad (16) Nissan Hangsik (13) Music, astronomy V.K.V. Niausa, Post Niausa c/o Shri Haider Ali Australia, U.K. Itwari Mohalla Dist. Tirap 7120 Arunachal Pradesh 786631 Shahdol 484001 Jitendra Kamboj (16) India Madhya Pradesh, India s/o N.D. Kamboj Pen-friends, movies Making friends, football 1090/3 Shastri Nagar Any country Japan, Bhutan Scheme No. 7, Meerut City 7116 7110 U.P. 250002, India Mahindra Kumar Mayank Khurana (13) Modelling, photography 52 Ashok Vihar, Phase I Panda (12) India, U.S.A. Delhi 110052, India c/o J.N. Panda D-22 Hospital Sector 7121 Stamps, cricket Bhilai Dist Ugyen Tshering (15) Australia, Germany Durg, Madhya Pradesh 2432 Betwa House 7111 IX B Sainik School, Rewa India Kshitij Sharma (14) Madhya Pradesh 486001 Stamps & currency 108/13 Sector. U.S.A. India Urban Estate Collecting coins Karnal, Haryana, India 7117 Thailand, Japan Music, cricket Prasanna Kumar P. (12) Switzerland, India Jawahar Navodaya 7122 Vidyalaya G. Raghavendra (15) 7112 s/o V. Gopalaiah Periye, P.O. Periye Chamanthabam Bruce K.H.B. Colony, Door No. 15 Kasargod Dist. Lee (15) Sandur 583119 Kerala 671316, India Lainik Yangbam Leikai Karnataka, India Stamps Mayai, Leinak, Painting, reading Bhutan, India P.O. Lamlong Bazar Any country Imphal, Manipur 795010 7118 7123 Making friends, reading Shilendra B. (14)

Kenga Gyeltshen (6)

Qr.No. E-40,

Any country

Therphu Comml. School Class II P.O. Tsherimshing Dist. Tashiganj East Bhutan Stamps, drawing Any country

7124
Kinzang Loday (13)
Kangpara Primary School
Class VI
P.O. Thinshing Dist.
Tashiganj, Bhutan
Acting, drawing
Any country

7125
Parveez Ubed (16)
c/o Ubedur Rehman
Dy. Director of Fisheries
Basbari, Naliapool
Dibrugarh, Assam-786001
India
Writing poems
U.S.A., Australia

7126
Amit Raj Gurung (15)
Motithang High School
Thimphu, Bhutan
Body building, music
Any country

7127
Pijush Thareja (13)
H.No. 1866, HBC
Sector 15, Sonepat
Haryana, India
Stamps, music
Switzerland, Canada

7128
Rahul R. Patil (11)
118/E-16, Bhueshwar Deep
21st Road, Chembur
ombay 400071, India

Stamps & coins Tanzania, Bhutan

7129
Balram Kumar Bohra (15)
939 Ground Floor
Dr. Mukerji Nagar
Delhi 110009, India
Coins, friends
Any country

7130
Yatendra Maganija (15)
2261 Satpura House
Sainik School, Rewa
Madhya Pradesh 486001
India
Reading, table tennis
Any country

7131 Showvik Bakshi (11) Flat No. 702, Pancharatna Coop. Housing Society Yari Road, Andheri Versova Bombay 400061, India

Reading, watching TV India, U.K.

7132
S. Naveen Kiran (15)
s/o S. Nageswara Rao
Quarter No. F-147
Orient Cement Colony
P.O. Devapur 504218
Andhra Pradesh, India
Stamps & coins, music
India, Uruguay

7133 Vikram S. Ambhore (14) S 1/494 Type III B R.C.F. Colony, Chembur Bombay 400074, India Reading, stamps U.S.A., Mauritius
7134
Duyu Rijo (13)
V.K.V. Seijosa Boys School
Seijosa P.O.,
East Kameng Dt.,
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Reading, drawing
Japan, U.S.A.

7135
Sasha Bose (14)
287 Aravalli Apartments
Alakananda
New Delhi 110019, India
Lawn tennis, coins
Any country

7136
Manish Pandey (13)
Abhimanyu House
Sainik School, Rewa
Madhya Pradesh 486001
India
Stamps, reading
India, Japan

7137
Sanjoy Deb (14)
Govt. H.S. School
Kalaktang, P.O. Kalaktang
Via Bomdila
Dist. W. Kameng 790002
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Writing poetry, magic
U.S.A., Japan

7138 Ankush Bhatia (11) 1/109, Old Rajinder Nagar New Delhi 110060, India Drawing U.S.A., Canada

7139 Ashish Guglani (10) 43 Club Road, Civil Lines

Ludhiana, Punjab Cycling, flying kites India

7140
Sachin Kalani (9)
D-38, Rajouri Garden
New Delhi 110027, India
Collecting coins
Any country

7141
Raymond Tamba (11)
MVE School, Post. Chalsa
Dist. Jalpaiguri 735206
West Bengal, India
Playing reading

West Bengal, Ind Playing, reading Israel, Germany

7142
Hammond Tamba (13)
Mountain View English
School
P.O. Chalsa
Dist. Jalpaiguri 735206
West Bengal, India
Reading, pen-friends
U.S.A., Israel

7143
Rakesh P. (15)
Vrindavan (HO) 30/167811
Ponnurunny Vythila P.O.
Kochi 682019
Ernakulam, Kerala
Reading, writing
India

7144
G. Sunil (12)
48-9-8 'Bhasha'
Vishnu Nagar, Gunadala
Vijayawada 520005
Andhra Pradesh, India
Stamps & currency,
reading
Any country

7145
Aditya (15)
83 Income Tax Colony
Uttari Pitampura
New Delhi 110034, India
Stamps & coins
Japan, U.S.A.

7146 Vishal Dedhia (14) 207/5621, Anita Kutir Opp. Odeon, Ghatkopar Bombay 400075, India Reading U.S.A.

7147
Mushahid Shamshad (15)
D-65 Jamia Campus
Colony
Jamia Nagar
New Delhi 110025, India
Pen-friendship, stamps
U.S.A., U.K.

7148
Gladson Williams (16)
Rly. Qtrs. No. 29 A
Ernakulam South, Cochin
Kerala 682016, India
Stamps, reading
Any country

7149
Vishesh Malik (16)
XII-B, Room No. 130
Vikas Hostel, S.D.M. School
Sonepat, Haryana, India
Pen-friends
Any country

7150 Mickey (14) c/o A-2-81, Safdarjang Enclave New Delhi 110029, India Watching television Any country

7151
R. Raghavendra (15)
Roll No. 82
Shri Ramakrishna
Vidyashala
Yadavagiri, Mysore 570020
Karnataka
Singing, swimming
India

7152
Rahul Prakash Kenkare (9)
15/115, Unnat Nagar-3
Goregaon 400062, India
Singing, reading
Japan, U.S.A.

7153
Ritwick Bhattacharya (13)
63 Shyam Road, P.O.
Naihati
Dist. 24 Parganas
West Bengal 743165, India
Stamps, reading
U.S.A.

7154
Sunley Varghese (13)
s/o R.P. Varghese
Sunley Gardens,
Kuttumukku
P.O. R.V. Puram
Trichur Dist.
Kerala, India
Painting, reading
China, Japan

7155 K.M. Mithlin (13) s/o Mr. K.S. Manjunath B-93 KIOCL Township Kavur 575015, Mangalore Karnataka, India

Brazil, Mongolia
7156
Kuenang Dorji (15)
Phongmey Primary School
Trashigang, East Bhutan

Reading, painting

Stamps & coins

Bhutan

7157

Jigme Tobgay (10)
Phongmey Primary School
Trashigang, Bhutan
Badminton, football

U.K., Japan

7158
Arvind Agarwal (16)
A-1/23, Prashant Vihar
Delhi 110085, India
Singing, reading
U.S.A., Russian Federation

7159

B. Sudhakar Reddy (15) Class X Sree Vidya Peeth Narketpally, Nalgonda Dist. Andhra Pradesh,,India Swimming, reading

Any country

7160
G. Anurag Deepak (15)
Class X, Sree Vidya Peeth
Narkatpally,
Nalgonda Dist.
Andhra Pradesh 508254
India
Stamps & currency
Any country

7161 Ch. Vamshi Chand (14) Class X, Sree Vidya Peeth Narkatpally, Nalgonda Dist. Andhra Pradesh 508254 India Reading, stamps Any country

7162
Abhijeet Sawant (15)
s/o Major P.K. Sawant
122/1 Officers Quarters
Laxmi Tek,
Ganeshpur Road
Belgaum, Karnataka, India
Currency, movies
U.S.A., Australia

7163
Yogesh H.J. (15)
1/164, 2nd Stop, M.I.G.
Sidding Nagar
Gada 582101
Dist. Dharwad
Karnataka, India
Stamps & coins
Any country

7164
Ashutosh Naik (12)
c/o Dr. N.K. Naik
Primary Health Centre
Valpoi, Goa 403506, India
Stamps, reading
Any country

7165
Gopal S. Shivpriya (16)
No. 15, 4th Block
Subramanya Temple St.
Kumara Park West
Bangalore 560020
Karnataka, India
Mountain climbing,
adventuring

7166 Tashi Lekpa (16) Incharge P.O. & Wireless

Zambia, Malaysia

Station
Thrimshing F

Thrimshing, East Bhutan Music, pen-friends Japan, Korea

7167
Parth P. Shah (9)
16 Avishkar Row Houses
Bopal
Ahmedabad 380058
Gujarat, India
Drawing, cycling
Any country

7168
Mayur Garg (15)
Sch. No. 2535
Badal House
Sainik School, Chittorgarh
Rajasthan, India
Painting, collecting stickers
Any country

7169
Biswajit Dutta (16)
c/o Shri Tarapada Dutta
Bulbulchoti
P.O. Kharagpur
Dist. Midnapore 721301
West Bengal, India
Painting, reading
Japan, France

7170
Ashwani Kumar Singh (13)
c/o V. Singh
Dept. of Horticulture
Dist. Changlang
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Making friends, cycling
U.S.A., India



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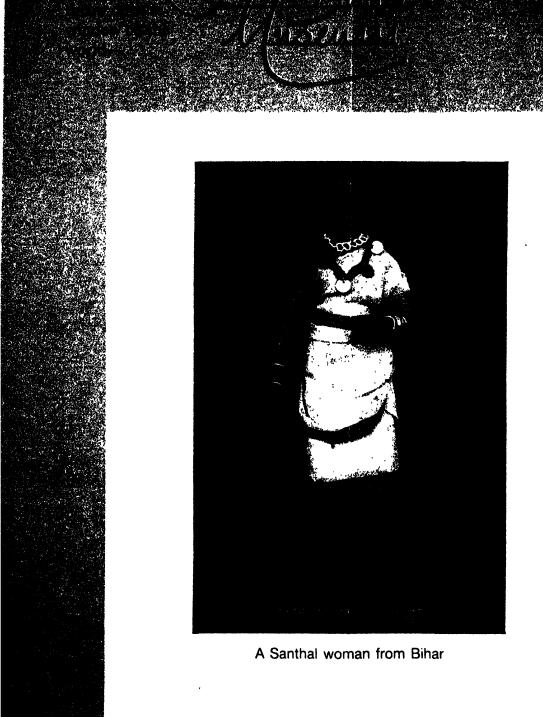


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Design and Layout Subir Roy

Circulation & Advertisements C.P. Ravindran

Area Representatives BOMBAY

C.H. Viswanath 502-A, Arun Chambers, 5th Floor, 317, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Opp.-Fort Market Bombay 400038 Telex . 78050-ASCO IN

MADRAS T. Balachandran Business Representative 92, Brindavanam Nagar Valasaravakkam

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Mamata Pandya
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Dr. Jagannath Mohanty

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CHILDREN'S WORLD 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg Telegram: CHILDTRUST

Telephones: 3316970-74 Typeset by Futura Graphics

C Children's World 1995

...Dear Editor

SUCCESS

I love reading Children's World. I think it is a very good magazine for guidance, advice, penfriends, stories and poems, and I love it. Wishing you more success in forthcoming issues.

Soni Bhatt (16), New Delhi

GRATEFUL.

I am a first-year
English Honours student
and am 19 years of age.
Till the age of sixteen I
had been an avid reader of
Children's World. Of late I
don't get much of an
opportunity to read the
magazine because my

college library does not possess a single copy of it. I have learnt a lot from the magazine so I shall be eternally grateful to this magazine.

Muniya Dey, New Delhi

SIGNATIONS

I am a regular reader of Children's World. It is a very nice and interesting magazine and I have learned a lot through it. But I have some suggestions. There should be a column for General Knowledge, a newsevents page, some amazing facts, and articles about collections and hobbies. There should be a column on talented persons of young age, or teenagers. I

will be glad if you will think about my suggestions.

Shaheen Taj, Udaipur

LIFE IS LOVE

Life is love
Love is a perennial
Fountain.
Love spells sharing
Profusely with relatives,
Neighbours, friends and
humanity—
As often as you can—
As much as you can...

 \star

Life has no meaning
Life just no purpose—
If one has not learnt
To love and to share
With one and all
Unto the end...

Erach Sauna (73), Pune

It comes bringing a whiff of spring in the air... In a place like Delhi, you cannot help but feel February's presence and rejoice in its joyousness. The pageantry of the Republic Day Parade and the solemnity of the Beating of the Retreat have cast a collective spell over the city and it seems like Nature is determined to do its bit. The green lawns at the India Gate and Delhi's (fast disappearing) traffic roundabouts are edged with patches of purple pansies and cinerarias—sunshine yellow and fiery orange nasturtiums and calendulas and all of

Spring's other children like stocks, hollihocks, sweetpeas, antirrhinums, phlox, verbena, larkspur, sweetsultanas, cornflowers... They peep and smile at you, under a gently warming sun, even though the crispness of cold is not quite gone.

For its gentle warming and challenging crispness, February is, or should be for fathers and friends, in both of whom, life tells you—warmth and crispness combine... February is just fine to reflect on what they mean to us and more importantly what they would like to see us as. February, they say, is a

...Dear Readers

time of reckoning. And so year after year, it has seemed like just the right time to put your best foot forward. To excel as it were... Time to sit up, fasten your seat belts and give life your best shot. Exams are just round the corner and because of its very brevity, the sweetness of February cannot be frittered away...

Helping you prolong this mellowness somewhat is, of course, your favourite magazine.

Happy reading and may the joys of spring be yours...

Editor



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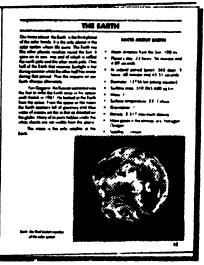
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little House Martin

Story: Ranjita Basu Illustrations: Pradeep Nayak

HE little house martin poked her head out of her nest carefully. She had never looked out before. This was the first time that she had slowly inched past her sister on her right and had cautiously taken a look at the outside world. She cocked her head to one side, then she cocked her head to the other side and drew her breath in. She had never imagined the world to be like this.

In front of her there was a garden with flowers of many colours and shapes. There were green and yellow and red shrubs growing behind the flowers. There was a border of coloured creepers running all round the boundary wall. On one side, under the eaves, there was another house martin's



The little house martin was about to crane her neck further when her mother called her back. "Come in, dear, you'll fall down and break your wings. You can't fly yet, you know."

more interesting shape,

side.

sort of bulging on the left

The little house martin obediently went in and quietly settled down next to her sister. She fluttered her wings as her mother had taught her to and ate up all the titbits that her parents brought her. She wanted to be strong and to be able to fly soon. She

longed to explore the outside world.

The next day the little house martin looked out of her nest again. She saw something she had not noticed before. On a bush on the other side of the garden was a nest, but a nest of a different kind. It was made only of twigs and was thin and round. It nestled among the leaves of a shrub instead of being attached to the corner of the verandah of a human habitation as the house martin's was.

The house martin fluttered her wings. She had been practising for many weeks now and felt strong enough to fly. She took a deep breath and breathed in and out as her mother had taught her to and waved her wings, first

CHILDREN'S WORLD FEBURARY 1995

to the left, then to the right, then to the left. "Mama, can I go out?" she asked eagerly, feeling sure she would be able to reach the bush in front.

"All right, dear," said her mother doubtfully, "but be sure and keep your head up and don't let your tail stiffen up."

The little house martin took a deep breath, raised her wings and pushed with her feet. She sailed out of the nest and felt that she was falling. Frantically she beat her wings up and down and immediately she swooped up again. She saw a branch below her, fluttered on to it and clung to it with her feet. She looked around her. Far and near there was different kinds of nests, some quite round, some untidy with twigs sticking out in all directions. In one nest, two little brown birds were twittering with their mouths wide open. Oh dear! They looked very hungry.

Every day the house martin flew out of the nest and sat on the shrubs closeby, now on this shrub, now on that. She looked at all the plants, the trees, the other nests. Then she would come and tell her mother, "Mom, don't you think that nest



there would look better without that big bulge on the side? Mom, don't you think our neighbour's nest could do with some extra leg space?"

Her mother would look at her fondly. Her suggestions seemed to be very sensible. "Maybe some day you'll build nests of the kind you like," she said.

The little house martin nodded happily. Many ideas went round and round in her head.

One day the little house martin was sitting with her brothers and sisters when their uncle came to dine. Over dinner he suddenly said, "Did you say Twitter has some interesting ideas about building nests? I'm building my new nest soon. Would Twitter like to try her hand at it?"

The little house martin was thrilled. She got busy and thought up a new and different design. She went to her uncle's verandah and there she worked very hard until her uncle's nest was finished. It was shaped like a cup and was closed on top, with a small opening on the side. Everyone loved it. Everyone admired it.

The little house martin soon became a famous nest-builder. She built nests for all their neighbours. Then birds started coming from the next garden to ask her to build their nests. She went and built nests of

new and unusual designs. She flew to the farthest end of the next garden and the next and built nests there. Soon birds were talking about the beautiful nests she built and how comfortable they were.

One day the little house martin was flying to a shrub where she was supposed to build a nest when she saw that she was passing her own old nest. She stopped at once and peeped in. Her mother was preening herself and her father was eating some worms. Her brothers and sisters were no longer there. They had, like her, grown up and left.

The little house martin was overjoyed to see her parents. She nuzzled up to her mother; she gave her father a peck on his cheek. They were also delighted to see her and asked her many questions about all the different nests she had built. "We hear a lot about you, dear," said her mother smiling. "You've become very famous."

The little house martin nodded happily. Then she looked round at her old home. There was the corner where she used to snuggle up with her sister. There was the curve where her other brothers and sisters used to fit in. And the corner where her parents used to sleep at night. Really, it was most comfortable. It was neither too big nor too small and there was enough space to exercise one's wings and stretch one's toes. Nothing that the house martin had designed seemed quite so comfortable or elegant. She had gone to far-off gardens and seen exotic nests but her familiar. comfortable home seemed now to be the best nest of them all.



Dear pranks and cranks,

Every now and then a grown-up suddenly gets some sense. It doesn't happen very often but when it does, the world quickly becomes a better place. Now, just two days ago, the world became a sweet, kind, smiling planet to live on. The birds chirped merrily and the sun shone at just the right temperature and the wind blew in just the right way—sort of ruffling your hair but not opening out your shoelaces.



A LETTER TO YOU



Let me tell you though, that all this did not happen by itself. There was a reason, and the reason was this—Raghu's mother asked me to do something very very important—she wanted me to make Raghu clean the windows in the house. What she said was this: "Perky, I know you are a sensible and intelligent and reasonable boy, sorry, a reasonable young man. You will do what I ask you even if it's difficult. You will do it. You will not shirk from it. Will you please ask Raghu to clean all the windows? I have been asking him to do this for the last eight Sundays and he hasn't done it. Now I am depending on

you. I know you will make him do it."

After that, admirers and praisers, what could I do? The birds were chirping away madly, the sun shone away, the wind blew gently, ruffling my heroic hair gently and I began to think of ways of making Raghu clean those windows.

It wasn't easy. Raghu had already, once, if you remember, decided to leave school and become a window cleaner. But he lost his job in fifteen minutes because he talked more than he cleaned. And who wants an elocution when the windows are still dirty? So asking Raghu to sign up for a window cleaning course wouldn't help at all.

Now as I was thinking, I looked out of the window where the birds were chirping and the wind shining and the sun blowing... oops... or whatever, and I saw my brother playing Hide and Seek. And then I got my brilliant idea! My super-duper gold medal idea!

Raghu is one of those fellows who thinks playing with my brother is more interesting than playing with me. My brother thinks the same. So when I saw my brother looking

behind the rose bushes, I knew Raghu must be somewhere around. And sure enough, as I turned into the backyard, I found him hiding under the kitchen window trying to look like cooked vegetable.

"Psst!" I said, "psssst."
"Sssh" he said,
"ssssssssh."

"I will show you a better place to hide," I whispered. "Much better place."

"Are you playing?" he ssshed.

"Do you want me to?" I asked in turn... The birds were shining away quite a lot. Raghu asking me to play Hide and Seek with him! Not that an intellectual like me needs to do it but sometimes... every now and then...

"Okay," I said. "If you want me to."

"Fine. Let's tell your brother. And listen, I have a fine hiding place for you, too."

Wow! This was getting better and better. Imagine Raghu thinking of a hiding place for me. The sun was chirping madly. And the wind was shining.

"Let me tell you where you should hide," I said. "He'll never find you there." And then like the extremely clever fellow I am, I said, "Just tie a towel around your head, take a bucket of soap water and some cloth and start cleaning the windows in your house. My brother will never find you."

Raghu looked at me, aghast. "Clean windows?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, looking him straight in the eye. "Clean windows. My brother will never look at you twice. He will think it's somebody else. Imagine you cleaning windows. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Ha ha ha," said Raghu.
"That's true, But listen to
my idea for you. You know
those rose bushes in the
garden? In your garden?
Why don't you tie a towel
around your head and
take a pair of scissors and
cut off all the dead leaves
on those bushes? Your
brother will never look for
you among the rose bushes. He will think you are
the new gardener."

"Rose bushes? Dead leaves?" I asked, aghast. The wind was not chirping much by now. My mother had asked me to cut off those dead leaves eight Sundays ago.

And then we heard voices in the kitchen. Our mothers' and my brother's. My brother was speaking. "I think the

plan is working. I saw them discussing something. Raghu must already be cleaning the windows and Perky must be cleaning the rose bushes. So now can I have my treat?"

Dear danks and clanks,

Questions. How did my brother guess what we were doing? How did he fool both Raghu and me? How did Raghu and I and my brother all hit upon the same idea? Is it true that all boys have bird brains?

By the way, what birds? What sun? What wind?

Yours among the thorns of life

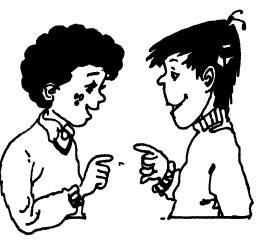
Perky

PS Please reply to my questions. I can't sleep, I'm so puzzled. PPS Pl. reply quickly. I'm

losing my hair. **PPPS** Pl. repl. immidtly.

Am losing my sense.

Pky.



Festivals and fairs

St. FEBRUARY SS: SWHISPER OF SPRING:

Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: B.G. Varma

YA Basant aur pala udant, goes an old saying. It means: Come the Spring festival, and away flies the cold.

This year the festival of Basant Panchami falls on February 4. But it is often cold and misty, even foggy, at that time. And it is like that for another week or two. Isn't the old saying wrong then?

Not quite so. Our festivals follow the Indian lunar months. So, in different years they fall on different dates of the calendar we use. In 1994, Basant Panchami was celebrated on February 15.

But Basant Panchami always falls on the fifth day of the bright fortnight (when the moon is waxing) of the Indian month of Magh. 'Panchami' refers to the fifth. Whether it is a little sooner or later, the coming of Basant does not mean that the winter has ended. It means the beginning of the end.

The first half of February may be cold, very cold. Yet a hint of Spring is in the air. In Delhi, some silk-cotton trees burst into beautiful, red flowers under a gray sky.

If you go to the countryside, you will find the mustard in bloom. The further you go, the more yellow mustard flowers you will see in the fields. So lovely and so common is the colour at this time that it has come to be known as Basanti.

Then, by the middle of the month, spikes of buds appear on the mango trees. To Sanskrit poets this is one of the sure signs of Spring. This is so in Delhi. (Delhi is our base in this series). From the south to the north in India, Spring comes to different places at different times.

Besides Basant
Panchami, we have two
more Spring festivals. One
of these is Shivaratri and
the other is Holi. Holi
always falls 40 days after
Basant.

The Romans had a goddess of Spring—Flora. We have a god of Spring—Vasanta. He is a minor god. But he is a favourite of the poets. In all ages they have sung of the god and the beauty of the season he represents. He is called Rituraja, the king of the seasons.

In other countries, too, very rich is the poetry of Spring. An English poet calls Spring "the year's pleasant king".

However, the deity worshipped on the Basant day is not Vasanta. It is Saraswati, the goddess of learning. She also presides over the arts. The stringed instrument veena, we are told, is her gift to man.

The worshippers place before her image, books, musical instruments and paint brushes. In Bengal her images are carried in processions and then immersed in the rivers.

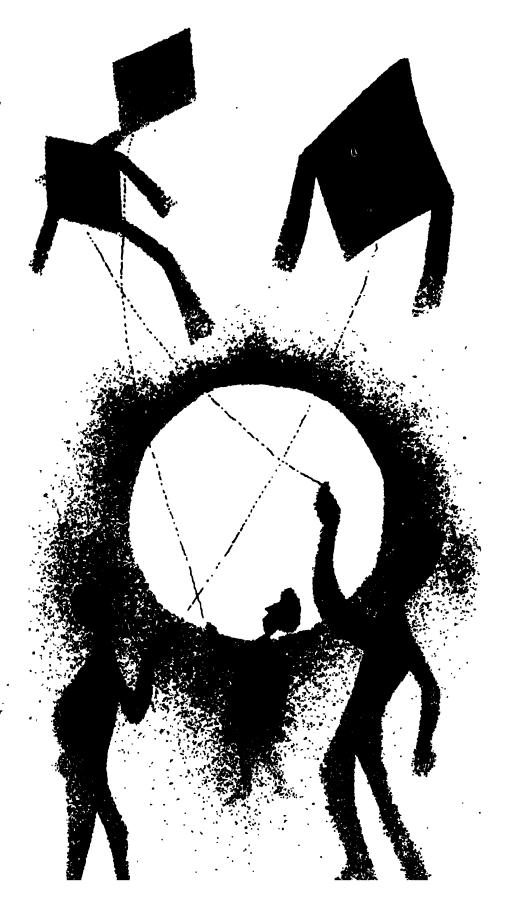
Before 1947, Basant was celebrated in a big way in many towns of northwest India. There were melas with stalls, games, merry-go-rounds and magic shows.

Most of the men then wore yellow turbans and women yellow dupattas. The mela thus looked curiously like a field of mustard in bloom.

At some places, Lahore (now in Pakistan) in particular, kites were flown on the day. Now you do not see many kites of Basant in Punjab. The old fervour is gone.

But Lahore carries on the tradition. In fact, more kites are flown there now than before. The city looks like the kite-crazy Ahmedabad on the Makara Sankranti day.

Delhi has more than Basant mela. But



these are fetes, put up by some cultural or women's groups. There are drinks, food, games, contests and singing and dancing. And a handful of men and women may be seen in Basanti turbans and saris.

Music lovers organise concerts of Spring songs and dances. One of our ragas is called Basant.

In February more and more flowers bloom each day. Soon the gardens are all a riot of colour. This has made February the month of flower shows. Each of these is like a fair—a fragrant fair.

For quite some years
Delhi Tourism has been
holding a garden festival.
It is a unique February
event. It is a merry,
many-tinted mela, and a
lot more. Besides the
flowers and stalls, there
are some special exhibits
and displays. For children
there are elephant rides
and other fun and frolic
games. This goes on for
three days.

At Surajkund, near
Delhi, a spectacular fair
opens on the first day of
the month. It is the crafts
mela which Haryana
Tourism organises. For
two weeks the place
bustles with activity.

February also witnesses Rajasthan Tourism's



Desert Festival at Jaisalmer. Its main attraction is a musical evening on the sand dunes.

The desert reminds you of camels. Well, in Jaisalmer you get to ride the long-legged oont too. Bikaner has a camel festival; and Jaipur, an elephant festival. These are all new celebrations. They aim to promote the old arts and crafts and offer off-beat amusements.

Similarly, we have the music and dance Pune

Festival, Elephanta Festival, Khajuraho Festival and Konarak Festival.

Shivaratri—the night of Lord Shiva. Though it occurs between Basant and Holi, nothing about it suggests Spring.

Shiva is one of the Trimurti—the three great Hindu gods. The other two are Brahma and Vishnu. In appearance Shiva is unlike the other gods. No crown or jewels for him. He wears a tiger skin. His hair is matted, and round

his neck is a snake by way of a necklace. He carries a trishul (trident).

He looks very much like a yogi or hermit. But he is as powerful as the other great gods. When angered, he is like a destructive fire. But he is always kind to those who call upon him.

Shiva is easily pleased. Instead of flowers, bel (wood-apple) leaves may be offered to him. For oblation, a small vessel of water will do.

The story goes that one night a forest-dweller was sitting in a tree. It happened to be a bel tree. Unwittingly, he dropped some leaves on a linga, the stone symbol of Shiva, below. From a savage the man became a saint.

Shivaratri recalls that night. Many fast during the day and spend the night in worship. There is a sort of mela outside each temple. Some of the Shiva temples are very old, and grand, too.

The hill town of Mandi in Himachal Pradesh has many Shiva temples.
There Shivaratri is celebrated for a whole week.
People go there from all around. So do many people from far-off places.
When Shivaratri comes, can Holi be far behind?

THE KUMBH MELA

The gods and the demons have always been enemies. But once—it was ages ago—they came together as partners. This was when they churned amrita, the drink of strength and immortality from the depths of the sea.

As soon as it emerged, the demons tried to grab the whole kumbh (pitcher) of amrita for themselves. But one of the gods foiled their attempt.

He took the form of a bird and, picking up the pitcher, flew towards paradise. The distance was very long. It took him 12 days to cover it.

On the way he rested at four places. At each of these—Nasik, Ujjain, Hardwar and Prayag

(Allahabad)—a few drops of amrita fell on the ground. The spots became sacred.

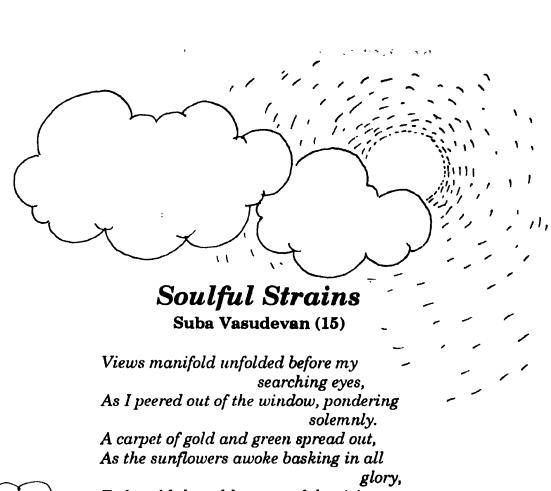
Ever since, bathing fairs have been held at the rivers there. As one day of the gods is equal to one year for man, the fairs take place every 12 years. Such a fair is called a Kumbh Mela. But not at all the places on the same day. It is held after three years by turns. After every six years there is an Ardh, or half, Kumbh.

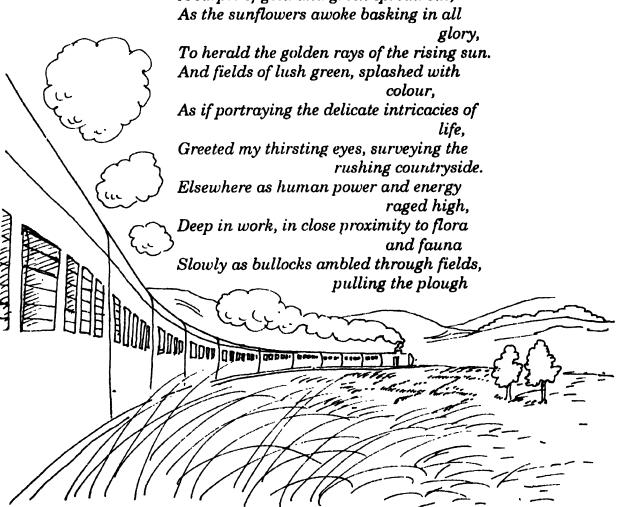
All bathing fairs of the Hindus are holy. But the Kumbh Mela is the holiest of all. Millions of people go there from far and near.

The last Ardh Kumbh was held at Prayag on January 30.

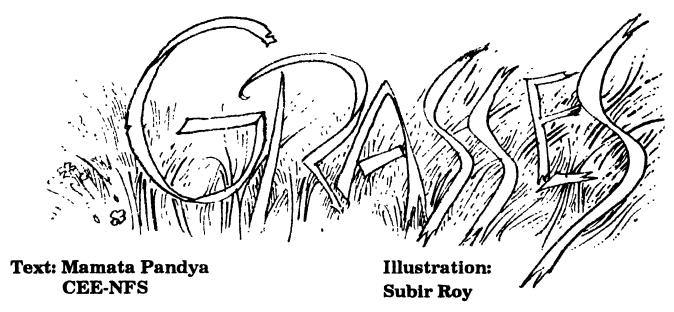








A work-engrossed human, its master urged it on and on... And the train chugged on and on... Passing acres of lush, sylvan surroundings, lovely countryside, Which in reality maybe just a common sight. But a treat to eyes plastered with visions of a concrete jungle. The sun rose higher, life started at a feverish pace, And I watched everything, as the train pulled along, In and out of numerous stations, winding all over the country, Going on with an aim, a destination in mind. And then the most excitingly wonderful singing of a dawn bird Greeted us travellers as we passed through its domain So haunting and soulful were the strains, They pulled at the strings of my heart... And even as I slowly emerged from my reverie. Another...another oh, so plaintive a strain, Fell on my ears, so piercingly deep it was, The cry, I realised, of a beggar in dying agony Such a desolate strain, it broke the chords of my heart!



RASSES are like people in crowds. They all seem to look alike. They do not stand out because of their colour, scent or flowers. Yet, how many of us know that the name 'grass' covers a number of plants which are most successful, widespread, versatile and virtually indispensible.

The grass family, Gramineae, is one of the most recently evolved and is the third largest in the plant kingdom. It includes worldwide about 10,000 different species ranging in size from the dwarf varieties of the alpine pastures to the gigantic bamboos of the tropics. No other family of plants has a relatively simple structure and at the same time

has an almost matchless ecological and economic importance.

If all the world's grass were to disappear, we would lose a large portion of our food materials. Grass seed or grain wheat, rice, maize, barley, oats, rye, sorghum and millet-forms the basis of the daily diet of people all over the world. Our daily life is also sweetened by another grass—sugarcane—the world's major supplier of sugar. Herbivorous animals, wild and domesticated, also depend on grass as fodder and forage for survival and sustenance.

Tough and Tenacious

Grasses have a tremendous endurance and regenerative capacity,

being able to withstand fire, trampling and grazing. This is due to the way in which grasses grow. The growing point of the new shoot is usually close to the base of the plant or even just under the soil. and it remains active throughout the life of the plant. If the upper section of the plant is cropped or damaged, the root stock at the base produces new sprouts rapidly. Grasses, thus literally, spring back from the earth.

The grass plant also spreads itself by putting out horizontal stems along and under the surface of the ground. Each joint of the stem is able to sprout roots and leaves. It also has enormous and intricate systems of fibrous

roots. More than half the total volume of a grass plant is underground in the form of roots and underground stems. It has been estimated that the root system of a mature rye plant may show an average total daily increase in length of five kilometres a day. And this is not counting the root hairs!

Grass flowers are small, drab and not fragrant, as they do not need to attract insect and bird pollinators. Each grass flower needs to open only once in its lifetime, and then too. briefly, to release pollen grains. The seeds, produced in large numbers, are light and easily carried by wind, water, animals and birds over long distances. They have even been collected from the air by a plane flying at 5000 feet!

Today grass plants cover nearly a quarter of the land surface of the earth. They owe much of their success to their structure and physiology which allows them to withstand a much wider range of conditions than other plants. Some species can grow in saline soil, nutrient-poor soil, or waterlogged soil, while others have been known

to adapt to large quantities of toxic metals such as lead, zinc, copper or nickel, concentrated in the soil.

Be it harsh sands, volcanic islands or other inhospitable environments which defy the growth of any kind of life forms—grasses are among the pioneer species to colonize these areas. However, the one condition grasses do need is good light; they cannot easily grow in the deep shade of the forest.

Guardians of Soil

With their elaborate mesh of roots and tenacious hold, grasses hold the soil and help prevent it from being washed away by rainwater or blown away by gusty winds. Grass cover also helps increase the capacity of the soil to soak the water and store it underground. At the same time grasses help to build up the soil environment making it more favourable for other vegetation to take over. Grasses are ideal for reclaiming wastelands and degraded soils.

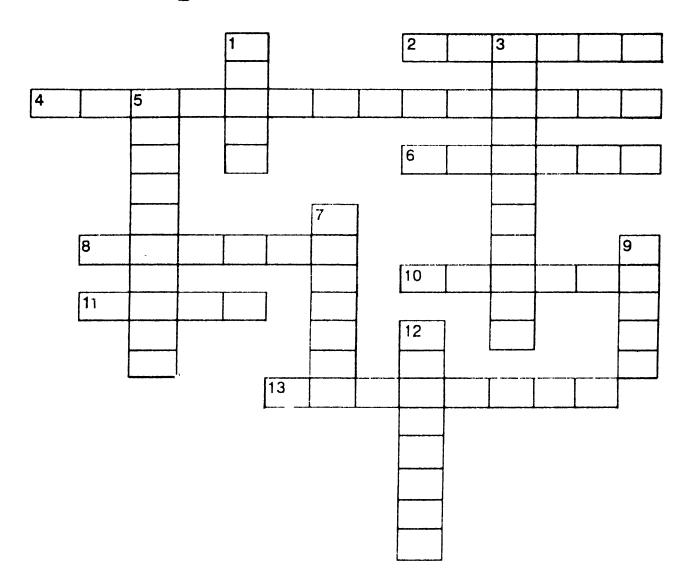
Few other plants can be put to such a diversity of uses ranging from human food and animal fodder to housing and handicrafts. Grasses can be an important cash crop as sugar-

cane is, or the basis of large industries like paper or alcohol. They can be raw-material for homebased and cottage industries like basket and mat weaving. In building, grasses, especially bamboo, have been put to a number of uses—from scaffolding to thatching roofs, flooring and plastering walls. Grass also has a strong base in almost all cultures and traditions. especially in India, where it is used in religious ceremonies, perfumes, medicines and musical instruments.

Today, overgrazing and encroachment by urban development activities have put great pressure on the number of grasslands. If care is not taken, the grass that we take for granted may become so scarce that life cannot exist on this earth. Imagine for one moment, a world without grass.



People and Places of 1994



Across:

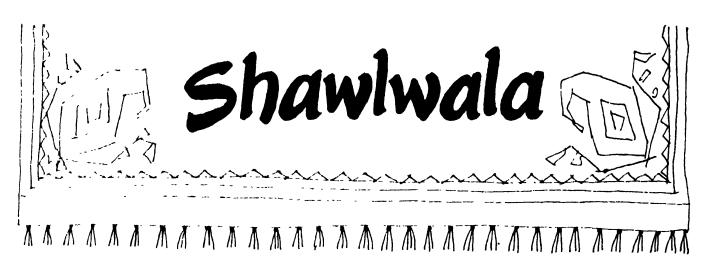
- 2. The country that reigned supreme in football.
- 4. A writer who fled her country because of threats.
 - 6. Capital of Chechnya.
- 8. Africa bleeds! Civil war and racial conflicts took place here.
- 10. India's beauty reigned supreme here.

- 11. Once bitten but not twice shy; a country that tried to be aggressive again.
- 13. He retired after a glorious innings.

Down:

- 1. A small island nation whose military junta was forced to beat a retreat.
- 3. He raced to his death.

- 5. He made a hat trick at the Ashes.
- 7. He was jailed, released and elected President.
- 9. The country that hosted the 1994 Asian Games.
- 12. The only country to have a mother and her daughter as the President and Prime Minister.



Story: Shobha Ghose

Illustrations: Viky Arya

T was winter. The days were getting shorter and colder. One chilly day when I was not adequately protected against the cold, I had to step out for a moment.

"Shawl chahiye?"

I had my back to the gate and could only hear the query.



"Shawlwala, Memsahib," the voice said.

So many of these walas had been offering their wares since the morning, that I was quite tired of hearing it.

"No, I don't want any shawl," I said. I was about to walk off into the house when something made me turn.

"Will you see them, Memsahib?" he asked me once again. There was something so winning and gentle about him that I could not bring myself to give him the rebuff I felt he deserved.

He took the bundle down with such faith in my kindness that I just could not refuse to see the shawls that he opened and spread out in front of me for my appreciation. They were really beautiful.

"They are lovely, aren't they? This will look nice

on you. My mother had a similar one. You must buy it."

"It must be very expensive. I really don't need anything as expensive as this."

"Oh, no, don't think of the expense. See how fine the workmanship is. It is one of the finest shawls I have brought. Look at the material. Just feel it. Soft to the touch, isn't it? And, light as a feather. It is as if a cloud has floated down and fallen on your shoulders. And see, just like milk, so white." With that he put the shawl on my shoulders.

"You look just like my mother. She too was beautiful just like you. Please buy it. I will be happy to think that you will be wearing it. I don't want anyone else to wear it. Please take it."

I laughed. "What a wonderful salesman you are!" I said.

"No, that is not true. I am not giving you sales talk. It is the truth. You look exactly like my mother. You are short like her and beautiful. It will be as if she is wearing it." He looked at me with such sincerity that I could not doubt his words.

"How much is it?" I asked.

"From anyone else I would ask a much greater price; from you, I will only take two thousand rupees. Is that too much?" He looked enquiringly at me.

"Sorry, I can't afford it," I said, preparing to go inside.

"Please don't go. I will take it in instalments. I am here till February. You can pay me a little every month. Please take it, Ma. I am not giving you sales talk. I swear to you by my roji, my business as a shawlwala. I am giving it to you as I would to my mother. I do not want to sell it to anyone else."

There was something so appealing about the boy, so sincere and genuine that I was moved to act against my better judgement.

"Very well, I will give you Rs.500/- per month although that is more than I can afford."

"I am happy, Ma. I am happy that you have decided to buy it. I wish I could have given it to you as a present. I gave my mother the other one as a gift for Id. We had money then. Business was good, sales were good and we had lots of money. Now, things are different. Our business is no longer what it was and so we have had to come here to sell our shawls. I can no longer give anyone presents. Even my mother has to have second-grade shawls." His eyes filled and quickly he brushed a tear aside.

I was moved. Poor boy, cycling away all over Delhi to sell his shawls. "Would you like to have a cup of tea, son?"

"Thank you, Ma. That will be too much trouble for you. I will go back and my brothers and I will sit together and drink tea." He put his shawls together and tied up his bundle. "Namaste, Ma," he said and cycled off.

On the sixth of every month the boy arrived with his bundle of shawls and rang the bell. I paid him Rs.500/-, and with a very happy smile he would ask, "What did



people say about the shawl, Ma? Didn't they admire it? You must have looked beautiful in it."

"Yes, everyone who has seen it has admired it. It really is beautiful. Lots of my friends have asked me if you can get one like it for them."

"No, Ma, not that one. That is only for you. They can have others, I have many other shawls. You give me their addresses and I will take beautiful shawls for them. But that one is only for my Ma."

"What is your name, son?" I asked.

"Rasool Mohammed," he said proudly. "I will give you my address before I leave. Will you come to my house in Srinagar?"

"I can't promise. I will try. If I ever have an opportunity to go to Srinagar and I have your address, I will certainly come to your house."

February came. It was the sixth. I was waiting with Rs.500/-, the last instalment for the shawl. It really was beautiful. Whoever saw it was all praise. I had worn it to one or two parties and people had exclaimed at its beauty.

The morning, however, went by with no signs of

my shawlwala. I was getting restless. It was lunch time and I wondered what had happened to the boy. I had got quite used to his arrival every month with his cheerful smile and stories of all that had happened in the intervening period. He used to tell me about his home and family.

"When I go home, I will have to take gifts for everybody. They will be happy to see me, and they will be very happy when they see the gifts I have taken for them."

It was one o'clock.

"Shall I serve lunch, *Memsahib*?" the cook came and asked me.

"Yes," I said.

I had bought a box of sweets for the boy. I intended giving it to him with the last instalment but there was no sign of the young chap.

I ate my lunch in silence. I was wondering how I could give Rasool Mohammed his money. What if he didn't come?

I had just gone upstairs to rest, when the ayah poked her head in and told me, "Memsahib, that shawlwala has come."

I was relieved. I did not want to have a debt on my conscience. I went downstairs. Rasool Mohammed was standing at the gate with a smile. He did not have his bundle of shawls. His cycle stood on its stand. He gave me a happy smile when he saw me.

"So, Rasool, you will be going home to your parents and little brothers and sisters?"

"Yes, Ma. I have sold all my shawls, thanks to you. There must be magic in your hands. I sold you the first shawl and now I have finished my whole stock."

I laughed, "I am glad I could help you."

"Ma, it was your blessing which helped me. I have never been so lucky in all my life."

"Don't say these things, Rasool. It is God who helps us in all things. Here is the money I owe you."

I handed the Rs.500/- to him and waited while he counted the notes. He counted every note carefully. Then, before I could guess what he was going to do, he took Rs.250/- out of the bundle and handed the rest of the money to

"This is enough, Ma. Please keep this as a gift from your son."

I was about to scold him and return it to him when



I saw the look of pride and pleasure on his handsome, young face and stopped.

"I too have a gift for you, my son," I said, giving him the box of sweets I had kept for him.

"For me?" he said, looking surprised.

"Yes. Open it and see what is inside."

He untied the string and stared at the sweets in disbelief. "This is lovely. I will take it for my brothers and sisters," he said.

"You eat these. I will get another box for them.

You come and take it from me tomorrow."

"No, Ma, I will be leaving for home tonight. I regard you as my mother, and I will be happy to give them what you have given me. There is one thing more. This is my address. A friend who knows English wrote it for me. If you come to Srinagar, please come to my home."

"I will. And when you come to Delhi again you must come and see me."

I thought that I would, perhaps, never see him again. Somehow I had grown quite fond of the boy and felt that I would miss his visits every month.

A few months went by. Suddenly, one fine morning, my son and his wife, Savitri, breezed in. "Ma, I have to go to Srinagar for a few days. Savitri will come with me. Would you like to come with us? Maybe you'll be able to see your foster son."

The shawlwala had become a subject of laughter in my house and everyone joked about it.

"Yes, I think I would like a change and, perhaps, as you say, I will see my foster son."

A few days later we reached Srinagar. The scenic beauty was enchanting and I stood on the verandah looking at the landscape in wonder. We were to go to Dal Lake that morning.

I had the paper with the address of Rasool Mohammed written on it. "I would like to go to this place," I told the gentleman who had taken up the task of showing us around.

"You want to go there, Madam?" he asked me. "It is not a place you should be going to. It is one of the poorer localities of Srinagar." "That is all right. There is someone I wish to see. I would be grateful if you could help me buy some sweets and fruit and get them packed."

It took us some time to reach that part of the town. Many enquiries had to be made before we found Rasool Mohammed. Why did we want to see him? Who were we? What connection did we have with him? These were only a few of the questions hurled at us. We were looked at with suspicion and distrust.

At last, however, we reached one of the little houses and Rasool Mohammed came out. I looked at him. He was not

as smartly dressed as he had been in Delhi. But he was the same as ever. He looked slightly embarrassed as he came forward.

"Rasool, I have brought some sweets and fruits for you." I gave him the box and waited for him to open it. "Go on, open it, it's for you."

Rasool opened the box and stared at the sweets.

"Please eat one at least in front of me. Last time you did not," I said.

Rasool took a sweet and started to put it into his mouth. There was a man with a flowing, white beard next to him. He hit Rasool's hand and the sweet fell down.

"Don't eat it. She is not one of us. It's probably poisoned."

I looked at him. I looked at the sweet on the muddy ground, and I looked at Rasool. My eyes brimmed with tears and I quietly turned away to go back.

"Wait, Ma."

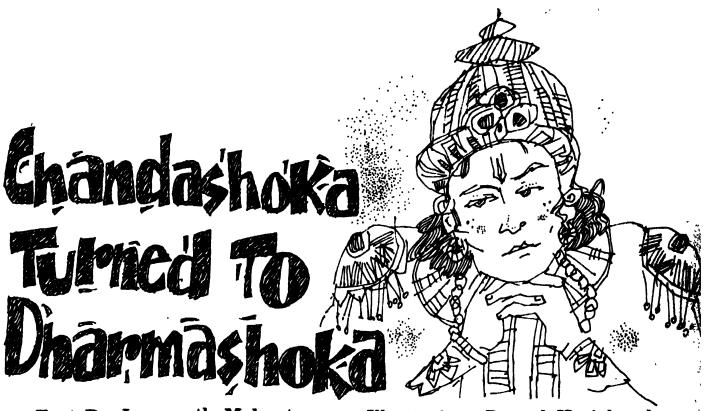
I heard Rasool. I stopped short and turned. He had picked up the sweet, dusted it and put it in his mouth.

"She is my mother. She will never give me poisoned sweets. She can only give the love of a mother. Would my mother give me poison?"

The unshed tears brimmed over and fell from my eyes.







Text: Dr. Jagannath Mohanty

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

T was more than two thousand years ago. Ashoka ascended the throne of Magadh, a kingdom in northern India. Although it was the year 273 B.C., he was crowned in 269 B.C., after four years.

Why this delay? History tells us that Ashoka was a monster of cruelty. That is why, he was known as Chandashok. He was over ambitious. In order to satisfy his thirst for power, he was made the Viceroy of Taxila by his father. Since he was not satisfied with this, he became the Viceroy of Ujjain also.

Ashoka was not the first son of his father, King Bindusar. But in

order to capture the throne, he killed his eldest brother. With a view to removing all the claimants, he killed 99 brothers in a series of fratricidal wars. Due to this reason his coronation ceremony was delayed by four years.

Ashoka was known as a great emperor. His empire spread far and wide. But he was unhappy. A neighbouring kindom, Kalinga (Orissa), a prosperous land, remained independent. He was always thinking of annexing that country to his empire. He lost his peace of mind.

Ashoka's grandfather, Chandragupta Maurya, had conquered lands from Hindukush to the Ganges and from the Himalayas to Karnataka. But he did not venture to conquer Kalinga. Ashoka's father, Bindusar, was equally powerful. But he also did not aspire to raise a war with Kalinga.

Kalinga was an independent land of heroes with a strong patriotic spirit.

It was in 261 B.C., the twelfth year of his reign that Ashoka decided to conquer Kalinga. He asked his Generals to make all preparations for war. No efforts were spared on this account.

Ashoka personally led the army and marched to Kalinga. He had an army of more than six lakhs and all the latest arms and ammunition of the time. He invaded Kalinga with the military strength of an all-India empire.

The people of Kalinga were mighty warriors and loved their country more than their lives. They fought against the invaders with utmost strength and sacrificed their life to save what they most coveted—the freedom of their land.

A fierce battle therefore, lasted for many days at different places of Kalinga. But the major war was fought at the foot of the Dhauli hill on the banks of the river Daya near Bhubaneswar. It was reported that the water of the river Daya turned red with the blood of the wounded soldiers. At last the people of Kalinga lost the war.

History gives an account of the Kalinga war—how desperately the people of Kalinga fought for their motherland; how fierce was the battle and how terrible was its outcome.

Ashoka in his Thirteenth Rock Edict wrote about the Kalinga War.
"The Country of Kalinga was conquered when the King Priyadarshin, Beloved of the Gods, had been anointed eight years.

One hundred and fifty thousand were therefrom captured, one hundred thousand were there slain, and many times as many died."

The horrible war was over. The battlefield was covered with thousands of dead bodies. The wounded and dying soldiers filled the atmosphere with their crying, wailing and sounds of utter pain and woe. The children and women were weeping bitterly for the death of their near and dear ones.



Darkness fell soon.
Emperor Ashoka was in his tent. He was not at peace. The tragic and ghastly scenes of the battle filled his mind with deep sorrow and regret. The agonised cries of the dying soldiers rang in his ears. He felt restless.

Ashoka had fought many battles in his life, but he had never felt so much anguish and pain before. The night advanced. The dogs and jackals fought among themselves. The owls hooted woefully.

The emperor came out of his tent in a hurry. He looked at the battlefield. The horrible sounds of the wounded and bereaved pierced his heart. The cruel and greedy animals were still fighting among themselves over the flesh of dead men and animals. He wondered. Am I any different from them?

The glow of a lamp moving among the slain men in the distance, caught Ashoka's eye. He became curious and proceeded towards the battlefield. Amid the heart-rending scenes, he felt suffocated.

The light came closer. The anguished emperor saw to his great surprise it was a sanyasi. He was holding a lamp and a bowl of water. He was providing succour to the dying soldiers, nursing the wounded and consoling them all with sweet and sympathetic words. His face was radiating light and peace. He was calm and quiet.

Ashoka was moved by the service the saint was rendering to the dying men. As he came nearer, the Emperor asked, "What are you doing here, O sanyasi?"

The saint calmly replied, "I am doing whatever is possible for me as a fellow human. But who are you?"

The Emperor replied, "I am Ashoka, the mighty ruler of the vast Magadh Empire."

The saint said, "O, mighty Emperor! You have won the battle. But at what cost? Can you win the hearts of the people? You have killed thousands of soldiers. You see, how many are dying and suffering from bleeding injuries. How many women and children have been made helpless? Can you give life to any of the dead ones? Can you give peace to any of the orphans and widows?"

Ashoka felt helpless himself. He was shocked.

He was extremely griefstricken.

The saint added, "O
King! You may conquer
kingdoms, but you cannot
conquer man. You can win
wars, but you cannot win
people's hearts. You can
only win people through
love and peace. The way
to love and peace is the
path of *Dharma* shown by
Buddha, the Enlightened."

Ashoka was impressed by the gentle and loving words of the sanyasi. He unbuckled his sword and laid it at the sanyasi's feet. He bowed low before him and begged for his blessings.

The sanyasi, Upagupta, accepted the Emperor as his disciple. Ashoka the Great became a Buddhist. He followed the path of love and peace thenceforward. He gave up violence of all kinds. The Kalinga war was the last war he fought. He made no conquests thereafter. He conquered Kalinga only to be conquered by it. Chandashoka thus became Dharmashoka.

At the apex of political power Ashoka realised the importance of spiritual power. After winning the war, he realised the irrationality of it. With great missionary zeal he propagated Dharma, the

eternal law of love and peace and brotherhood, throughout the Asian continent.

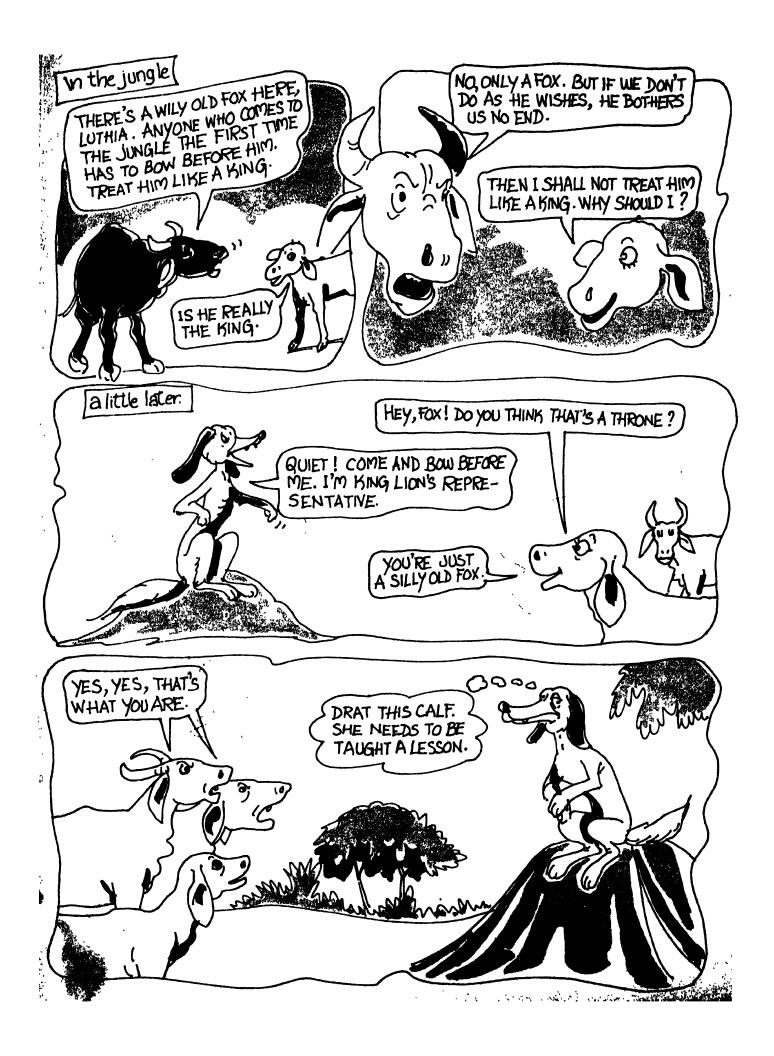
The Kalinga war has been an epoch-making episode in the history of mankind. The Dhauli hill and river Daya (Compassion), the rock edict erected by Ashoka there, is a standing testimonial

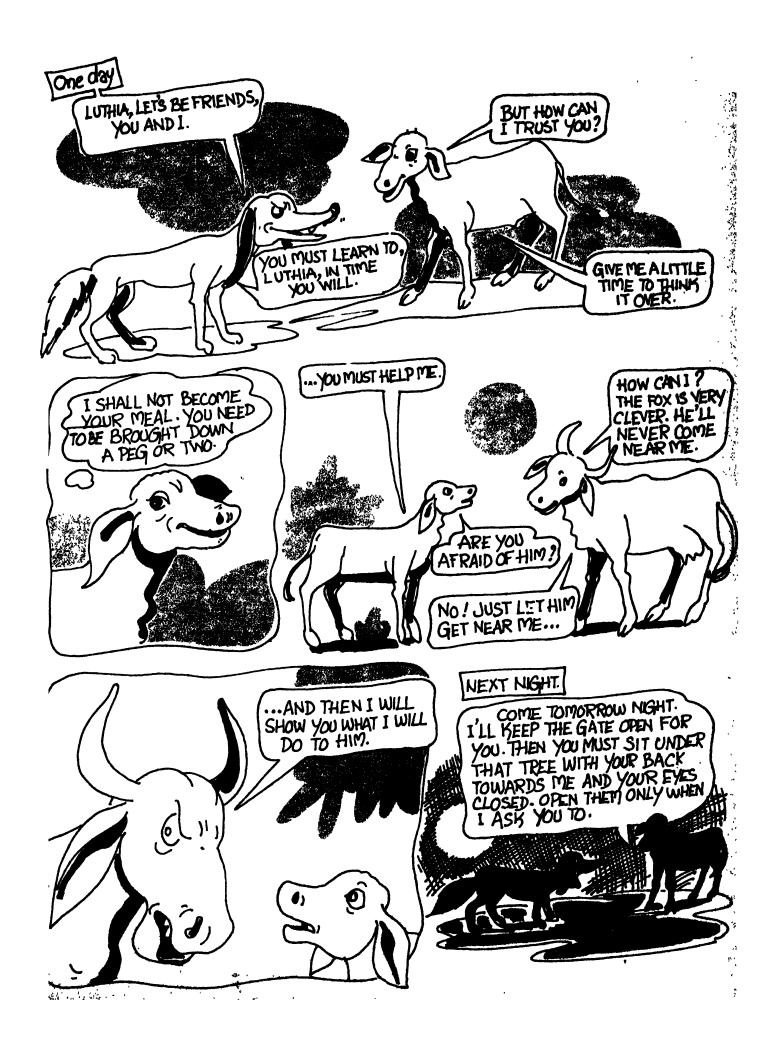
to an Emperor's change of heart. The majestic elephant carved out of a single stone atop the rock edict now symbolises one of the greatest battles of human history. The Peace Pagoda constructed by the Buddhist fraternity at Bhubaneswar too reminds us of this immortal story. Its wall-panels have

depicted beautifully memorable scenes from the lives of the Buddha, the Enlightened and Ashoka, the Remorseless, or Chandashoka as he was at the time of the Kalinga war which brought about the change in him to Dharmashoka.













Story: Sumathi Chandrashekaran (13)

EFORE I start narrating my story, let me describe my family. I'll start with my father. He is a very quiet man whose motto is-There is no love sincerer than the love of food.' He is also—I've got to say this—the intellectual of our family (unfortunately!), and is often hailed with the prefix brainy attached to his name. The reason he is honoured with such a title is because, since his youth, he has somehow managed to excel in whatever subject he chose.

When he was a young

lad, he was his teacher's pet, always managing to obtain high marks in every single subject, which, if you have a look at his report cards of yester-years, seems quite impossible to get nowadays. He was a good cricketer, badminton and table-tennis player, could pick up languages quite fast; which means he should have moulded his career either towards sports or should have striven to become a linguist. But it was not to be. While in college, he took up civil engineering and is: now working on computer software-which incidentally, he is not qualified for!

Next on the list is my mother—Amma—as I am more used to calling her. She is not quite like the 'woman in your life who jabbers and chatters and tells you what the matter is with you and who has a huge mother with a-voice-that-shatters-glass'. In fact, the distinction between my mother and her mother—my grandmother—is quite the other way round.

My mom, when she is in the mood, does certainly have a voice that can shatter glass and she doesn't chatter all that much. Whenever she says something, she's quite blunt and to the point and makes it as short as possible.

As for my grandma, she is the timid one of the family and always ready to make delicious things for me to eat. She is not at all the sort of woman who has a voice that shatters glass. In fact, she is quite a lady.

Amma—unlike my father—is not a prodigy but she does have common-sense which, in turn, she puts to good use, though that is a very rare happening these days (in my opinion). She's got a hard heart and I have

never yet succeeded in melting it enough for her to allow me to skip school. This clearly shows that she is *not* a sentimentalist. In fact, in her opinion 'the barrenest of all mortals is the sentimentalist'.

Now for my younger sister. The world is divided into two categories—those who have younger sisters and those who don't. And undoubtedly, those who have younger sisters, are well aware of the perils you have to go through in life because of them. She is just six and sometimes the most irritating specimen of a younger sister I have ever seen.

Because she is the 'youngest' in the family—with her crocodile tears and her babyish ways, she somehow manages to cajole everybody at home into giving her what she wants, and precisely at that very moment when I am about to claim it. Hence the reason why I am always saying, "Lord, confound this sister!"

Coming up next is the last (but not the least) member of my family. Yes! you guessed it—it's me. I have no doubt, that by now, you would have formed some sort of an opinion of me. I am, according to you (I suppose), the sort of person



who drags a story till its death and has no intention of keeping the reader entertained. Hmmm!
Well, I have got to tell you something about the characters of the story before I start of with the story itself, haven't I?

Now, I must say something in my favour, or else everybody will think that I am not brave enough to stand up even for myself! To begin: I was born on a Sunday. That explains everything, doesn't it? For those who don't understand, it has been said that a child that's born on a Sunday is 'fair and wise and good and gay'. That means that I am fair and wise and good and happy. Not a bad description, eh?

Not satisfied? Want to know more about me? Well, undoubtedly you have deduced the fact (as swiftly as Sherlock Holmes) that I am an avid reader as I have been quoting so many lines from my favourite books. authors and poets. Other than my books my other beloved companion is my 'Walkman' which indicates that I am interested in music. Interested, I should say, is not the appropriate word for I am passionately devoted to music.

Interest in music has

been there in my family for years—both my mother's and my father's parents have had some education in music. My mother, who has a reasonably good voice, had been trained in Hindustani music during her childhood and my father, though not professionally trained, knows every single raaga existing in Carnatic music today. You name it, he knows it.

As for my sis (that confounded creature!), I can't say that she has a very sophisticated taste in music for she is always singing all the vulgar

Hindi film songs that exist. Ask her whether she knows any song sung by Mohammed Rafi and she's never heard of him!!

Now for Me the great!
My interest includes all
the above mentioned
varieties of music except
the last (I prefer the old
Hindi film songs more)
plus Rock music, which
not surprisingly, is the 'inthing' in music nowadays.

The reason why I am explaining to you (boring you, rather!) with the genealogy of musical interests in my family is because this story is based upon this common interest.



of the four members of my family.

The story starts (whew, at last!) not on a fine, sunny Sunday morning, but on a wintry, gloomy and predictably boring Monday evening. It was Republic Day and a holiday for all of us. A holiday would generally have meant having all my friends at home and possibly going to the park for a game of badminton or something. But on this particular occasion, all my friends (except me, of course!) had managed to convince their parents into taking them out somewhere. This left me, not solemn, sad 'n' lonely, but definitely bored.

I had read and re-read all my books and library books three times over. The library was closed (it too has its days off, I see!) so there was no question of getting any more books issued. There was no market open anywhere nearby, so shopping was ruled out. Topping all this, my parents and my sis were at home and the only option left was my Walkman.

But alas for me! My intentions were doomed. Destiny is sometimes cruel. I remembered that my ill-fated Walkman had been given for repairs (it

was spoilt because of my consistent mishandling of it, so my father says, but I have no doubt that the wicked brain of my sister's was behind all this mess) the day before.

Then a couple of thoughts wandered in.
The first was to listen to my cassettes (I hadn't proceeded to CD's as yet) on the gigantic music system which adorned our hall.

Suddenly, there was a power failure. The sudden blackout was not as disappointing as the knowledge that I could not play anything on the stereo... Am I getting a bit confused? Well, whatever it is, I guess you have enough sense to understand what I have just written.

So that thought had to be 'unthought'.

The other one (thought, I mean) that had been wandering in my mind a few moments ago was that I should entertain myself by singing. My voice is not that pleasant to the ear, rather it's closer to that of a donkey's. I have inherited my father's voice and, unfortunately, my sister has inherited my mother's. The latter two can sing beautifully, unlike the former two.

But I was dying of boredom (metaphorically speaking, of course) and so I proceeded undaunted, i.e. the M.S.Subbulakshmi of the family (or am I mistaking myself for somebody else?) began her routine of singing. Note: This is not my daily routine, so don't draw false conclusions.

I am an extremely systematic person (other people in my social circle do not share the same opinion). I distribute my various interests in music into different weeks, i.e. to put it more clearly, I allot one week for each of my favourite styles of music one week for Carnatic music, the next for film songs, and so on... I always try my best not to break my routine but invariably (as expected!) I manage to do so. This New Year, I resolved to stick to my routine and surprisingly have managed to do so. But then the New Year is just a few weeks old... This particular week happens to be my Western music week.

I started off with a number which described my predicament very appropriately—a Carpenters, song called 'Sing...'

"Don't worry that it's not good enough for anyone else to hear.



Just sing, sing, sing a song..."

And so on. I sang away to glory, with absolutely no consideration for what the other members of my family were going through. I had locked myself in my room with the window as the only source of air (certainly not fresh!) entering my abode. My guess is that my parents and my sis had tried hammering at my door to stop the din that I was creating, but unfortunately for them, they did not succeed in doing so due to my extraordinarily loud voice. I think my sister must have been really fed up with my singing because, after a while I heard her singing, "Yeh kaali kaali ankhen..." right outside my door. But I paid no heed whatsoever to this interruption and continued nonchalantly with my singing. This time Cliff Richard's "Summer Holiday".

Now I'd like to tell you something—once my sister starts singing or gets all worked up, it is extremely difficult to quieten her. On this occasion, she was both, and as I made no attempt to stop her, my mother tried to do so.

I think I have mentioned earlier that my mother has a voice that can shatter glass. This time, she screamed and shouted but all in vain. Then she too followed my sister's example and started singing. This was in the Hindustani style. I was quite shocked to hear her singing, but didn't try to stop her, because I thought that she, my sis and I sounded quite a pleasant trio-we could go into professional singing. or such like. At least, that was my opinion but it certainly wasn't others'.

My dad, who had all this time been reading the day's newspaper rather quietly, tried to pay as little attention as possible to the noise that we were making. Once my mother started singing, he gave up. He too started singing. This was different from all the other music that could be heard—he held forth in the Carnatic style! It was a terrible rendition of

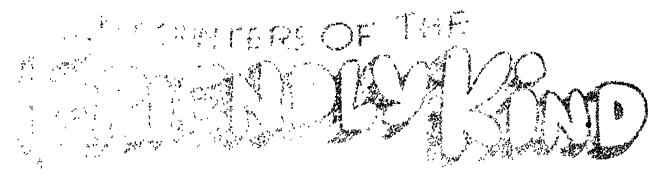
Tyagaraja's Rama Nannu. In thinking that at least his singing would make us all stop, my father was quite wrong.

We are not the most humorous family living in our area, but this time we certainly made fools of ourselves. The din had reached all our neighbours' ears and they tried their best to stop us.

Suddenly, as suddenly as it had gone, the electricity came back. And I stopped singing (wondering what cassette I could play) and then everybody else stopped, one by one in succession. And all of a sudden, but only for a moment, silence ruled our house!

Nowadays, when I look back upon my life (I've not had much of it, though) it is rather embarrassing when I think of this particular incident. I (and the members of my family) have been teased ever since, and hate even to think about it.

You must be wondering then, why I am telling you this tale. Well, now that it is not a secret, why not tell it to the whole world, eh? And yes, you have rightly concluded that the question, "To sing, or not to sing?" has never arisen in our family. How is it in yours?



Story: Kuheli Sen

Illustrations: Subir Roy

OU have to see him to believe me. Yeah! I am not joking. You would be amazed if I tell you some of the things he has done right in front of these two eyes. But then let me start at the beginning.

I bumped into him four years ago... literally! I was strolling down the winding path after a particularly bad day at school. I had lost faith in human kindness and most of all in friendship. My best friend had been very nasty to me and all because of a remote operated toy plane! Which was, incidentally, his and not mine.

Although I was passing by my favourite haunt, I didn't once look up. The day's happening brought a frown to my face and just at that moment something hurtled round the corner and hurled itself at me, with a useless (needless to say) last moment "Loo..oo..k out!" The next moment I was lying in a heap with what looked like a cross between a hedgehog (his hair stands up) and a hyena (that big grin) with twisted bicycle tyres

attached to its head. I stared into two laughing, twinkling eyes winking at me.

My natural good humour being at its lowest ebb, I felt anxious



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to wipe that big grin, rather guffaw, out. How was I to know that I was witnessing the turning point of my life!

"Hi! I am so (giggle) sorry. Are you all right? I mean, are you hurt? It is not altogether my fault, you know. You should have seen me waving and whistling. Hey! I know you don't mind at all, your smile tells me as much."

That was a grimace, not a smile.

"Will you be my friend?"
Why not, why not!
Friend indeed, huh! I
voiced my bitter thoughts
on friendship and went on
to give a lecture on the
treachery of beings called
friends.

"Ha! Dejected soul! Arise, O fallen one! Your plea has been heard and seen to," and so saying pulled me up with a jerk. "Want to see a squirrel's nest?" He took off at once and it took me some time to catch up with the diminishing figure. By this time I was sufficiently curious to know more about this guy who had made friends with me with a smile and a wink. I felt close to him.

As we cleared the rotten fence by the green pond he came to a sudden stop hear the mango tree.

Holding up a hand he

hushed me and approached stealthily ahead. I had stopped in my tracks after the first warning. There was no one to be seen all around and he beckoned to me.

"Lovely mangoes, huh?"
In a trice he was up.

"Catch!"

The crickets were singing in a monotone when a shower of pebbles hit the windowpane that night. I quickly got up to open the window, but suddenly the lights went off and I stumbled on a chair and fell. A general commotion had ensued downstairs...

"Where is the match box?" "What about a candle?" were common queries.

heard something moving almost noiselessi A door creaked open... I could hear my heart beat so hard that I was afraid it would burst. A soft breeze, though warm, chilled me to the bones a it indicated that the verandah door which hac been hitherto closed, was now open. I groped for th door frame but instead touched a cold. clammy substance that turned out to be a hand. I screamed and fled downstairs.

As I hit the last stair, electricity was restored and so was I, to an extent

"Bh...h bhoot!" I screeched lustily and was rewarded with a box on my ears. As I was shakily relating what had happened upstairs, Binu, my sister, was heard howling from those quarters. A quick investigation revealed that she had gone through similar trauma and was crying inconsolably.

We all fell silent as magically the electricity was switched off again.
Through the eerie silence Binu's wails erupted occasionally.

"Do something," cried Ma, clutching Binu to her heart.

Someone lit a candle. As the light flickered and went out in a sudden gust of wind, we saw a hairy image flit past the passage. This time there was no doubt... we had all seen it.

"Yoohoo! Stand back everyone."

Blam! The main door opened suddenly to let in... my friend! Dragging the hairy form of the ghost after him. He marched to my father and solemnly handed over his toy gun to him and thrust the ghost at us. We immediately thrust it away as he went outside. The lights came on and my friend entered soon afterwards.

Meanwhile the ghost seemed to be trembling. I guess he was more scared of us than we were of him.



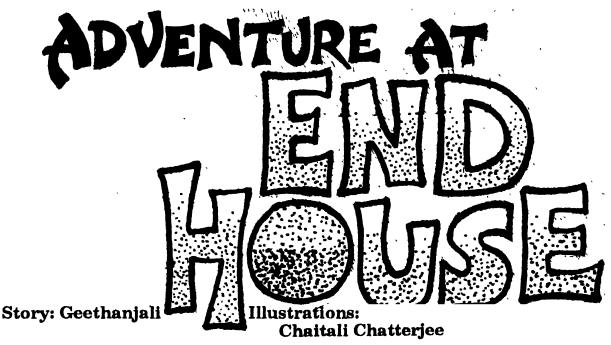
He bent to touch my father's feet. Father moved back in surprise. The ghost fell with a thud and howled, "Let me go, please let me go. I... I didn't take anything. Please don't shoot me with that AK-47!"

There my friend of the afternoon interposed brandishing the gun, "Keep quiet and hands up too. Let me do the talking."

Turning to me, he continued, "I was waiting for you to open the window—I wanted to show you the big mouse that I had caught in my trap—when I saw this hairy ghost climbing the verandah. By the way, don't get taken in by his looks, his costume is borrowed from

a local theatre company. You must make a note of it, friend, these things come in useful to a thief... Blah, blah..."

The thief, it turned out, was after my Ma's and aunt's jewellery, which is kept in the room next to mine, upstairs. After switching off the main connection, he quietly completed his mission but was unlucky enough to encounter me on his way back. This made him flee to the other end of the passage. He got the fright of his life when Binu screeched in his ear and he made off down the stairs. He was planning a quick exit through the window when he was arrested by my new found friend, Rahul, and his toy gun.



Enter Snapper

Part II

Four friends, Manisha, Sheetal, Vivek and Siddharth get together in Madras. They are intrigued by the new occupant of End House in Gandhi Lane, Miss Daisy, with whom they eventually get along famously.

OW lovely the dolls look!"
Sheetal exclaimed running over to the showcase filled with dolls.

"I made them all," Miss Daisy said proudly. There were dolls of various sizes and shapes. Sponge dolls, dolls made of beads, leather dolls and dolls made of cloth. There were dolls with golden hair, and with red hair, dolls with blue eyes and pink cheeks.

"You must be awfully clever with your hands, Aunty," Vivek exclaimed.

"Will you teach me how to make dolls, please?" Sheetal asked.

Miss Daisy laughed and nodded. Manisha's hands

itched to play the piano but she did not dare do so. Miss Daisy saw the look in her eyes and said in an encouraging tone, "Go on, Manisha, play the piano if you want to."

Siddharth gave a bark of rude laughter. "Nishy does not know the abc of music," he hooted.

"Never mind, Manisha, you go ahead and play the piano if you want to," Miss Daisy soothed.

Manisha needed no second invitation. She ran eagerly to the piano and perched on the stool. She ran her hands over the black and white keys, loving the deep haunting sounds they made. "Vivek, you can borrow my books if you want to," Miss Daisy said. "And now who wants some hot bhajias? I am going to make some."

The children followed Miss Daisy into her spotless kitchen. The bhajias that Miss Daisy fried for them, were so tasty that they really tucked in. When the last bhajia had disappeared, Vivek exclaimed, "Gosh! Just look at the time. It's seven o'clock!"

"Mum and Grandmother must be searching for me," Manisha said jumping up. "Thank you Aunt Daisy for a lovely evening."

"Run along, children, and do come again," Miss Daisy smiled.

"Where were you?"
Manisha's mother demanded when Manisha finally stole into her house.

"At End House with Vivek, Siddharth and Sheetal. Oh my, we had real fun. Aunt Daisy is a wonderful person. She says that she loves children. We spent a wonderful evening at her house."

"I am glad you enjoyed yourself, but I hope you will not bore Miss Daisy by visiting her often,"
Manisha's grandmother said.

bored with the children. She was always waiting for them with some special dish ready. Much to Grandmother's amusement, the four children spent most of their holidays at End House.

"What do you do at End House with Miss Daisy?" Vivek's mother asked curiously one day.

"Oh, Mummy, we play the piano, play interesting indoor games with her, help her in her garden..." Vivek began but Siddharth interrupted him, "And, of course we eat all the delicious things she cooks." must be thinking that you are a greedy set of children."

"Oh, not at all,"
Siddharth assured her
blithely. "She told us that
she and her cousins were
even worse when they
were children."

"Well, I suppose your visits to End House will have to end soon. Your school will be reopening on Monday," was all his mother could say.

School reopened, but the visits to End House did not end. The children always found time to run to Miss Daisy and pour out tales about their schoolmates.



after school had reopened, Miss Daisy suggested, "It is a lovely day. Let us go for a walk."

"Let us take a picnic lunch," Manisha suggested. "We can go to the lake. It is an ideal picnic spot."

Miss Daisy was always game for anything, "Good idea," she said. "I shall go and get some food ready."

"We all will," Vivek declared. "We shall be ready in about half-anhour."

Within half-an-hour the children and Miss Daisy set off with a big basket of goodies. The countryside had a fresh and verdant look as it had rained the previous day. Sheetal could hear birds chirping as she skipped along. "Just look at these flowers! Aren't they lovely?" she observed bending over a huge clump of violets which grew wild by the roadside.

"I like the tiny flowers better," Manisha declared. Numerous little flowers bloomed cheerfully as they left the main road and came to a winding path which led to their lake.

The girls squealed in delight as they reached the lake which glistened tranquilly under the bright sunshine. The boys, who had been left carrying the heavy picnic

basket, groaned under its massive weight. They thumped down the basket on the ground and stretched out on the spongy grass, near the lake. "Phew! That was a long walk. How lovely it feels to lie down like this," Siddharth said, staring at an azure sky.

Vivek nodded contentedly. Miss Daisy took out a book and began to sketch the lake. The two girls ran wildly over the spongy grass. Vivek nearly dozed off, lulled by the sound of the wind in the trees. A large drop of water falling on his face made him jump up. "Don't tell me it is raining."

The sight of Sheetal's laughing face made him look sheepish.

"Wake up, lazybones! You didn't come here to snooze, did you?" Manisha demanded, giving him a poke in the ribs.

"How about some food now?" Siddharth suggested looking longingly at the picnic basket.

"Yes, I am starving," Sheetal said at once. It was amazing how soon the *chappatis* and *aloomatar* disappeared.

"I am glad I made some cutlets for you all," Miss Daisy observed. "You really remind me of my childhood. I am an or-

phan. I used to live with my aunt and cousins in Dehradun. They were all much younger than I, but we got along just fine. We used to go on such picnics often. The eldest, Marie was great fun. The other two were twins-Anita and Shiela. They were like-as-pea twins. However, while Shiela was a big eater in those days, Anita hardly ever ate anything. Yet the funny thing was that they were the same weight. We used to have great fun together." Miss Daisy sighed, "Now everything has changed. Enjoy your childhood while you can, children. I sometimes think that it is the best part of life."

"I suppose so," Manisha said thoughtfully. "I wish we could all be Peter Pannever-grow-up, you know."

"I always thought that adults are lucky," Sheetal said with a tilt of her head. "They don't have to cram for exams or sit in class through a boring hour of maths."

Miss Daisy laughed, "I confess I felt that way when I was a kid but now I would give anything to be a child again. I am so glad that you children are accepting me as one of you and letting me in on your fun. My cousin, Shiela,

always says I am childish."

Manisha poured out the lime juice.

"This is paradise," Siddharth declared.

"Shhh..." Vivek said suddenly, "What was that?"

"What was what?" Sheetal asked lazily, stifling a yawn.

"There, listen," Vivek cocked up his ears. Snarls and growls filled the air, "Sounds like a dog fight. What a pity! It was so peaceful here," Miss Daisy was ready to flee.

"Let us watch the fight," Vivek said eagerly.

"Of course not. Let us go." Sheetal ran after Miss Daisy but finally Vivek had his way as the dog fight was taking place in the path which led from the lake to the road.

A huge dog was fighting a puppy half its size. The air vibrated with the sounds of ferocious growls. The black puppy was a valiant fighter. He gave as good as he got. He bared his teeth angrily and growled deeply in his throat. The brown dog was bigger and stronger. Miss Daisy could not bear to see the pup being mauled by the dog. Vivek flung a stone at the dog who gave a yelp of astonishment and pain and ran

away, tail between hislegs.

The black puppy collapsed in a heap on the grass. He had received several bruises on his body and one ear had been completely bitten off. He did not moan or whimper. He struggled to his feet but fell down at once. He tried to get up again.

"He really is a stouthearted fellow," Siddharth said in admiration.

"We have to take him to the vet," Miss Daisy said matter of factly. "Bring the picnic basket, Manisha."

Manisha handed over the empty basket to Miss Daisy. The children tried to coax the pup into the basket, but he just lifted baleful dark eyes at them.

"Move over," Miss Daisy ordered. She bent down and began to talk to the pup in a strange, low voice. At first the pup paid no attention. Then he pricked up his ears and his nose twitched as he smelt Miss Daisy.

"Come on now, brave boy. You are hurt, aren't you? Don't worry. I shall take care of you." The pup gave a whimper. The children watched in fascination as he allowed Miss Daisy to pat him. She gently coaxed him into the basket. "Now let's take him to the vet."

"You are a wonder, Aunt Daisy," Siddharth marvelled at her as they walked back to the veterinary doctor's house, carrying the heavy basket between them. "He did not even notice us. How did he come to you?"

"That is not surprising," Miss Daisy smiled. "I have had dogs in my house ever since I was a child. My cousin, Anita, and I were crazy about dogs. We had about three or four of them at my aunt's place in Dehradun."

The children and Miss Daisy went straight to the veterinary doctor's house.

As the doctor opened the basket, the pup got out snarling viciously. "Where did you find this creature?" the veterinary doctor demanded, rescuing his fingers from the pup's sharp teeth. "He is too fierce by half."

"What surprises me is how Snapper has the strength to snap and snarl. Did you see his ear? It has been completely bitten off," Siddharth exclaimed.

"Snapper! What an apt name. Trust you to come up with a name like that," Sheetal laughed.

"Will he live?" Manisha asked, wide-eyed.

The veterinary doctor

smiled reassuringly at her. "Of course, he will. He has got lots of spirit. Let me tell you he will not give up without a fight. Now please wait outside while I deal with this fellow."

Snapper was a mass of bandages when the doctor had finished with him. He looked rather queer with one ear covered with bandages. He was very much alive and had not lost his nasty temper. He let Miss Daisy coax him into the basket. Once they reached End House, she laid him down on the carpet. He curled down happily enough with his head on his paws. Miss Daisy brought him a bowl of warm milk. The door bell pealed. Sheetal ran to open the door. Outside stood a fair, slim lady. She was dressed in jeans and a white cotton shirt. She had a suitcase in her hand.

She seemed rather surprised to see Sheetal. "Hello, little girl. Does Miss Daisy live here or have I come to the wrong house?"

"Miss Daisy does live here. I am her neighbour," Sheetal smiled.

Miss Daisy looked up as her unexpected guest entered. A warm smile filled her face, "Anita, what a surprise! Come on in. Children, this is my cousin, Anita. Don't you remember I told you about how I used to live with my aunt and cousins?"

"Yes, we do," Sheetal said eagerly. "Is this the cousin who has a twin?"

Anita gave the children a warm smile. "I am glad to know you have heard of me," she laughed. Then her eyes fell on Snapper. "I see you have got yourself a dog, Daisy. What has happened to this fellow here?"

The children explained how they had rescued Snapper. "Poor fellow," Anita crooned, bending over Snapper. She stroked his dark head.

"Please be careful,"
Manisha warned her.
"Snapper has the devil's
own temper."

Anita gave a tinkling laugh, "Don't worry, I have a way with dogs."

Much to the amazement of the watching children, Snapper did not snap or snarl. He gazed lovingly at the newcomer.

"Well," Vivek exclaimed, "that beats everything. We helped rescue him, yet he snarls at us. Now he is fawning over you."

"Anita," Miss Daisy asked, "what brought you here so suddenly?"

Anita looked up at her cousin. "I received a telegram from Marie. She will be coming here to End House in a week's time. Didn't you hear from her, Daisy? You two were always close."

"I suppose I will, soon,"
Miss Daisy said. "I suppose she is coming to
collect the jewels that
your mother left her. I will
be glad to hand over those
jewels to her. How is your
twin, Shiela?"

"As grumpy and discontented as ever. She always thought that mother would give those jewels to her, you know," Anita laughed.

Vivek made a sign to the other three. They all rose. "I suppose you would like some time alone with your cousin, Aunty. Will Snapper be staying here with you?" Manisha asked.

Miss Daisy nodded.
"Yes, he will. He is obviously a stray and has no home. I always wanted a dog to keep me company. Now that Snapper has come, let him stay."

As the children went home they did not feel too pleased. They all had the feeling End House would not be the same with the bad tempered Snapper in it.

To be continued



Text: Dipavali Debroy

chess personalities of the year 1994, candidates at the IAS examinations were asked. Karpov, Anand and Tania Sachdeva went the right answer. What makes this a remarkable answer is the fact that while Karpov is around forty and Anand around twenty-five, Tania, born on 20 August, 1986, is just over eight.

In fact, Tania figures in the Limca Book of Records as the youngest person to win an international event in any sport. In 1994, in the British Championship for children, she came first in five different categories:
Under-Eight, both Boys' and Girls'; Under-Nine.
both Boys' and Girls' (the boys' championship jointly with Simon Buckley), and the Under-Ten, Girls'. She had won a title in the British Championship for children in 1993 too in the girls' section and in her own age-group.

Raymond Keene, a British chess player, who writes a chess column for British newspapers, chose two of Tania's games and printed them in his column. As her coach, G.B. Joshi, says, she not only played well at the British Championship this year, she played consistently well in every game.

More recently and at home, Tania has been placed second in the Delhi State Championship for Women for the year 1994. (The first is Anjana Jha, who is around 14). Tania is representing Delhi in the 21st National B Championship for Women, being held in Kerala.

I met Tania at the informal precincts of the recently established '64 Squares Chess Academy', where children sat with their chess-sets, under the supervision of coaches G.B. Joshi and K.C. Joshi.

Tania is fair and petite, with glasses and short hair.

She told me that she started playing chess when she was just five. Her parents played chess and so did her brother and sister. Watching them play, she had wanted to join in. How could she play when she did not know the moves, was their question. When she insisted on playing, they found that she knew every move. They then arranged coaching for her and made her a member of the Botwinnik Chess Academy. Now she puts in about three to four hours of chess practice every day.

One of her two coaches, G.B. Joshi, is ranked 15th in India and has an ELO rating of 2295. (The international ELO rating system was devised by Professor Arpad Elo and measures the strength of a chess player. For example, Kasparov has a rating of 2800 and Anand a rating around 2720.) The

other coach, G.B. Joshi's brother, K.C. Joshi, was the captain of the Delhi University Chess team when it won the interuniversity chess championship. When Tania goes to play in tournaments, her coaches too go with her, as they did to Britain and Jamshedpur. It is under their coaching that Tania has won her laurels.

Though her achievements have never made Tania feel proud, Tania said they made her feel happy, especially when she won the British championship for the second time.

A world champion is what she would like to be. She did not seem to be bothered by the fact that people are already comparing her to Grandmasters Peter Leko and Bobby Fisher (both of whom became Grandmasters at very young ages).

She said she would like a match with Luke McShane, the current under-10 world champion. As for her favourite chess players, they were Kasparov and Anand and Judith Polgar.

(Judith Polgar is considered the best chess player amongst women in the world. But since she does

not play in women's tournaments at all, she is not the women's world chess champion.)

Among the children that Tania plays with, she said she liked to play Bhriguraj Singh Sharma, a brilliant young chessplayer from Delhi, aged around sixteen.

The sort of game Tania likes to play is an attacking rather than a defensive game. With the white pieces, she explained that she mostly plays king pawn openings, but sometimes she does play queen pawn openings also. (King pawn openings are more tactical and attacking than queen pawn openings.) With black against king pawn openings, she prefers the Pelikan variation of the Sicilian defence. (The Sicilian defence is the most attacking defence that black can adopt against a king pawn opening.)

She thinks her strong point is her middle game rather than her opening or end game, which is quite common with many young chess players.

Tania said she was not nervous at the prospect of playing with adults in the National B Championship for Women. This, in fact, is a striking aspect of

Tania's chess; perhaps more striking than her wins against children in the British championship—she can match her skills with adults as well.

In the Tata International Open Chess Tournament (TIOC 1994) held in September 1994, Tania held her own for hours against mature, adult players. There were other children playing against adults. But they had all accepted defeat within three or four hours. Tania had gone on for six hours, against Sekhar Sahu who is in his late thirties and is an international master.

But there is more to Tania than 64 squares of black and white. Daughter of Anju and Pammi Sachdeva, sister of Karan and Amrita, "Tanu" stays at Hauz Khas, New Delhi,

and studies in Class III of Modern School, Vasant Vihar. Her favourite subjects are English and Maths, and after that, Social Studies and Science. On the whole, she likes going to school. She studies about an hour or two everyday, but after her chess practice is done. Apart from texts, she likes to read books like Thumbelina, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Ugly Duckling, Little Mermaid, and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Other than chess, Tania likes skipping and playing Boggle. "But I like chess 100 times better." She does not play with dolls, and, in general, does not have much time for playing with the children next door. She likes painting too, she said.

The interview over.

Tania walked across to where the other kids sat at their chessboards. She went around, looking into the games that were being played, offering 'expert' advice, as well as joining in the fun. As the games developed into little fights, she tried to restore discipline; but laughed as much as anyone else when a prospective Bobby Fisher lost his balance and fell on his back. She came across as a normal and happy child, no different from others of her agegroup.

So, it is all the more impressive that, as this piece goes to the press. Tania has already forced the Kerala champion, K.S. Preetha, to a draw in 45 moves at the National B Championship for Women. Perhaps we shall soon see her in the National Women's A.

People and Places of 1994

ANSWERS

(See page 19)

Across:

- 2. Brazil
- 4. Taslima Nasreen
- 6. Grozny
- 8 Rwanda

10. Manila

- 11. Iraq
- 13. Kapil Dev

Down:

1. Haiti

- 3. Ayrton Senna
- 5. Shane Warne
- 7. Mandela
- 9. Japan
- 12. Sri Lanka

CHILDREN'S WORLD FEBURARY 1996



Story: Sukhendu Dutta

WAS in charge of the hospital at the adivasi village. Though called a hospital, it was actually a charitable dispensary with two tables and four chairs. But it was ranked a hospital because of its two beds, or rather two creaking charpoys—coir cots used by common villagers. No one would envy the size of the room. It was just large enough to hold the tables, chairs and the two beds'. There were also some bottles of medicines and a few minor surgical instruments.

The hospital was founded by Raja Sahib. He had

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

done little to improve the living conditions of the adivasis, who were once his subjects. But he had built the hospital for the welfare of the poor villagers. The village was surrounded by jungles and hills. No medical facilities were available within twenty miles of the village. Even so, the poor villagers never ventured anywhere near the hospital. In case of illness, they preferred to go to quacks or witch doctors. Many of them died for want of proper medical treatment. But they never found fault with witch doctors. They just blamed their destiny!

The villagers, however, came to the hospital when mauled by wild animals. Somehow, in such cases, they were convinced that there was hope for recovery if treated in our illequipped hospital. And such cases were quite a few. Driven by acute poverty, the villagers had to depend on the forests for their livelihood. They entered the jungles to collect firewood, wild fruit, roots and berries. But the forests were thick with wild animals. Of them. the tigers, leopards and wolves were shy of men. They were quick to spot human approach and

generally avoided them. But the bears were a real menace in the jungles. They were not only slow to detect human approach but also whimsical and unpredictable. They attacked men without provocation. The victims were brought to the hospital, sometimes from places far away, even after a day. Our treatment saved quite a few of them.

One day, some young men came to our hospital, carrying an old man. The man, wearing a short dhoti and a torn kurta, had ugly wounds in his shoulders. A bear had bitten and mauled him severely.

I looked at the victim It was an appalling sight. Blood was oozing out of his wounds. The upper part of his body was bathed in blood. His kurta was mere shreds. He was groaning painfully. His body jerked spasmodically as pain shot through him. He could not even lie down straight.

"How did it happen?" I asked.

His companions, in an excited tone, told me the story. The victim, while collecting berries in the forest at daybreak, stumbled upon a bear. The

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animal was busy demolishing a termite mound to feed on the white ants. Both were unaware of each other as they were too preoccupied with what they were doing. When the man had unwittingly gone too near the bear, the animal stood up in panic and swiped at him. I

looked at the pale face of the wounded man. What a hard way of making a living! The man panted and groaned as the compounder removed his blood-soaked rags and cleaned his wounds. I examined him carefully and was relieved to see that there was a good



chance of saving him even with our crude instruments.

I gave him a tetanus toxoid injection and applied an analgesic ointment on his wounds. The pain lessened to a great extent within a few minutes. We did all that could be done to make him comfortable. The compounder started preparations for the dressing. An antibiotic injection too had to be administered. Sweat poured from my face and brows but I had neither time nor hands to wipe it off.

Just then the door of the hospital, which had only been ajar, flew open. A man in khaki uniform stood at the door. He had a bird in his hand. Following him, in walked Kumar Sahib. He was in a shirt and breeches, with a floppy hat on his head. Kumar Sahib was carrying a gun in his hand and there was a hound at his heels.

Carrying a gun was very much a part of his image. The forests around were the happy hunting grounds of the trigger-happy Kumar Sahib. I knew he often camped in the forest with his men and dogs. Even in the jungle as in his palace, his

men did everything to make him comfortable. He would, after a heavy breakfast washed down with a generous supply of a good, liquid refreshment, set out every morning for his shikar trips. With his gun and hunting dogs, he did his best to eliminate all the animals of the forest, from a timid hare to a mild chital, that came within his sight!

"Look at the bird, Doctor!" Kumar Sahib drew a chair noisily and sat on it with an unlit cigarette hanging from the corner of his mouth.

Holding the bird by the legs, the khaki-clad guard dangled it before me. I raised my eyes and looked at the bird. Kumar Sahib had taken a shot at a Chir pheasant today! He stared round the room, lit the cigarette and gently tossed the matchstick away. The matchstick, still burning, landed on the floor. By then his dog had started sniffing at everything in the roomthe bottles of medicines. the surgical instruments and even my stethoscope on the table!

"We always try to keep our hospital clean, Kumar Sahib," said I, coldly.

Kumar Sahib arched his eyebrows. He rose and

throwing away the unfinished cigarette, kicked the dog in fury. The poor thing yelped miserably.

I knew Kumar Sahib loved his hound. He always took the dog with him on his shikar trips. Was he really angry with the dog? Or...

I was holding the injection syringe in my hand. Kumar Sahib advanced towards me. "I want to take the bird to our palace and rear it," said he. "It's one of the finest birds in our forests, isn't it, Doctor?"

I turned my head and looked at the bird. The bird, with its beautiful plumage, a brilliant-coloured, long tail and a patch of red skin around its eyes, was about the size of a village poultry. I knew it was a game bird. When he had shot it, why did he not send it to his kitchen?

I pointed to the man lying on the bed and said, "I shall have to attend to the victim first. The man will die if not attended to in time."

Kumar Sahib frowned at me. "Leave him to his fate, Doctor!" he said, annoyed.

I could not believe my ears. "Sir," said I, uneasily, "the victim's life now depends on timely treatment."

Kumar Sahib's jaws hardened. He shrugged his shoulders and dismissed my virtuous protest with a wave of his hand.

I stood hesitantly, wondering what to do.
The hospital was founded by Raja Sahib, Kumar Sahib's father. I got paid by them—and well paid, too!

"I pity the man!"
Kumar Sahib turned his
eyes towards the bed
where the victim was
lying. "But do you know
the Chir pheasant is one
of the most endangered
species? Would you not
give a hand to save this

rare breed, Doctor?" He stared at me.

I smiled a little. Since when had his love for wildlife grown? This was not the first time that he had shot a rare bird or animal. He considered himself a privileged shikari and paid scant regard to wildlife rules. He had smeared his hands with animal blood, irrespective of whether they were rare or not. He had killed animals for their heads, skins and horns and even for the mere pleasure of killing! He regarded his exploits in the jungle as a symbol of his bravery and took the animals' heads, skins and horns to his palace as

trophies. I had seen leopard skins spread over a sofa in his drawing room! Forest staff never dared to open their mouths against the all powerful Kumar Sahib. And now, all on a sudden, he had turned into a wildlife lover!

"Go out!" Kumar Sahib suddenly barked at the men who had brought the victim to the hospital. The men were taken aback. They looked at him in great fear; and slowly walked out of the room. How could they disobey Kumar Sahib? The villages and the jungles around once belonged to Raja Sahib. The zamindari had long been abolished. But



Kumar Sahib still saw himself as their 'Raja'. And so did the poor villagers. They dared not look up at his face, let alone disobey him.

The guard placed the bird on the table. It made a rapid fluttering noise and dragged itself a little by moving its wings. "The poor bird is hobbling in pain, Doctor," said Kumar Sahib.

"The bird has not yet given up its effort to fly away!" I said gravely.

My eyes turned again and again towards the hapless man who lay half-dead on his bed. He was groaning faintly. But Kumar Sahib could not bear that! He was more concerned with the bird, his eyes fixed on it. "The poor bird is struggling for its life!" said he.

"The bird is making a futile attempt to escape, Kumar Sahib!"

Suddenly my eyes fell on the men standing outside the room. They were looking at me reproachfully, their eyes wide open. The men had carried the victim for twenty miles through the jungles and hills. They had no transport other than their own legs! They were determined to reach the hospital in time and

walked non-stop for eight long hours.

My conscience began to goad me. These simple, poor men had not learnt to demand justice and had always been denied it. But how long would they remain as docile and timid as they were today? And how could I, being a member of a noble profession, perpetrate an unethical practice? Would the man die just for Kumar Sahib's whim?

Conscience is a dreadful scourge. It took me only a few moments to win the battle. Suddenly I raised my head. "Excuse me, Kumar Sahib!" said I firmly, and advanced towards the wounded man in bed.

"What!" I heard a hissed warning from behind. But I was desperate. "There's nothing serious about the bird, Kumar Sahib!" I assured him with a bitter smile. "It has merely injured its wing."

Kumar Sahib stared at me. I hurried over to the victim and looked at his agonised face. I felt his pulse and turned to the compounder for the injection.

Kumar Sahib stood still. He never expected such a turn of events. His eyebrows shot up. He looked at me without batting an eyelid. There was anger and hatred in his eyes.

I administered the second antibiotic injection to the victim. We dressed his wounds carefully and bandaged them. The man closed his eyes in apparent peace. The victim's companions were looking at us, beaming with joy.

Kumar Sahib stood still all the while. He was stroking his gun gently, watching me. The polished barrel of the gun gleamed like glass in the light. I knew he was not himself. He might even press the trigger in this excited state of mind!

But he did nothing. Suddenly he turned, banged his fist on the table and left the room. For a moment, he looked defeated.

The wounded bird lay on the table. The guard looked at me in utter stupefaction. "Sahib has got angry, Sir!" said he, timidly. "The bird is not fluttering. It will die!" Helplessness was writ large on his face.

"Don't worry!" I said, calmly. "It has a minor injury and will fly after a week. Ask Kumar Sahib to set the bird free. It belongs to the sky!"

THE WORLD THROUGH

The Eyes of A Blind Poet

A report by Sudha Sanjeev

T was a tribute to a blind poet; a salutation to his poetry; a recognition of his sublime love for Lord Krishna.

It was a tribute to the blind of today; a reminder that he too was one like them; an exhortation to transcend physical handicaps and search for strength within oneself.

Name of the play: Surdas. Venue: Siri Fort. Presented by: Delhi Public School, R.K. Puram.

For the thousand-odd blind children who 'witnessed' the dance drama on the life of the immortal poet, Surdas, it must have been a memorable occasion indeed!

In the words of the Principal, Mrs. S. Chona, "No amount of knowledge, wisdom or intelligence can make a person complete, if he or she is not sensitive to other people's pain." If 'Surdas' was an attempt

to create an awareness of 'other people's pain', then all those who were involved, directly or indirectly, in the production, as well as the 20,000 who watched the seven shows would certainly have benefited from it. The fact that there were a number of blind 'seeing' the show with them was poignant. Many would have tried, if only for a few minutes, to 'see' the show as the blind children were doing on those days.

The idea of presenting the life of Surdas, covering 105 years, as a dancedrama must have been a daunting one. But the credit goes to R.G. Verma for the script and lyrics, and to the director, Shalendra Goel for a high degree of perfection and professionalism in the presentation. One did feel that some of the scenes were too short, but given the time-span the play

covered, it can be excused.

Sharing the laurels equally are Pt. Jwala Prasad and Ms. Ratna Shree, whose music and choreography respectively, provided not only the backbone but were the high-points of the show. The technical aspects, like the lighting and the sets, too, were commendable (though, it seemed gimmicky at times, it achieved the desired effect and response).

Most children study Surdas's poetry in school. Very little of the poet's character, emotions, struggle or conflicts are revealed in the brief synopsis of his life that is prescribed for the students' knowledge. As such Surdas, like the other Indian poets, remains a two-dimensional character, whose poetry must be learnt by rote for examinations, and forgotten immediately thereafter. It is no small wonder, then, that children in India are more aware of the lives of European poets than they are of their own poets.

It is for this aspect too

—for bringing to life, and for adding depth and character to a poet who, till then, was merely a name, 'Surdas'—that this 'experience' is, truly, a laudable one. It would be remiss not to mention the skill, the perfection, the zest and the zeal with which the participants dedicated themselves to the performance. Collectively, and as one, it was their tribute!

Uday Shankar Inter School Dance Competition

Bal Bharati Public School organised the seventh Uday Shankar Inter-School Dance Competition in the Little Theatre Group Auditorium, New Delhi, on December 7 and 8, 1994. Forty-two schools participated in the four categories: Kathak, Odissi, Bharata Natyam and Group Dance.

In Kathak, Ramjas
School's Meenakshi
Awasthi won the first
prize, Govt. Model
School's Namrata
Pamnani the second, and
St. Xavier's School's

Shilpa Malhotra the third.

In Odissi, Rachna
Vaidya of St. Thomas's
School and Kaveri Dey of
Salwan Public School won
the first and second prize
respectively, with Ankita
Vinayak of Springdales
School and Gunjan Ahuja
of B.B.P.S., Pusa Road,
sharing the third position.

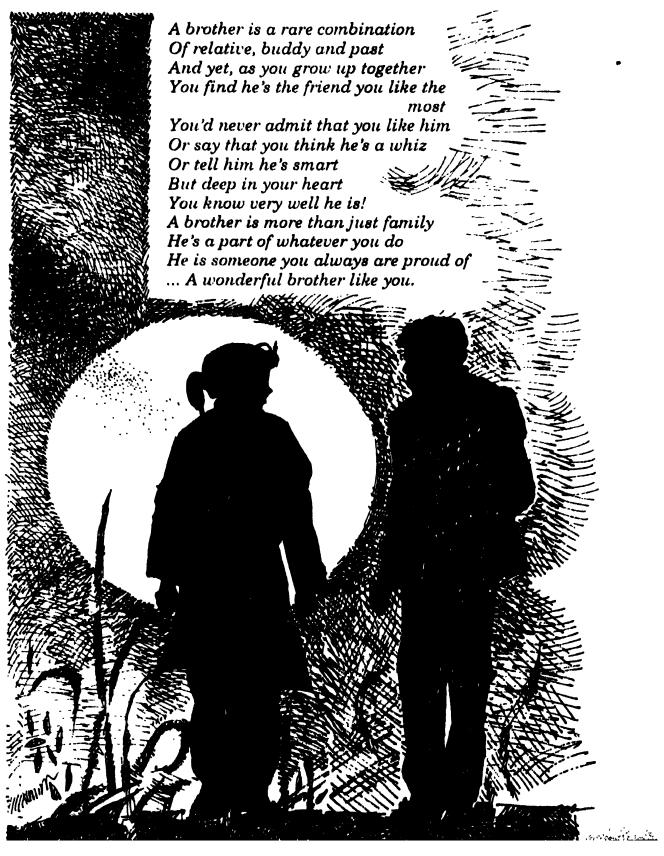
Bharata Natyam saw
Nandita Veermani of
Convent of Jesus & Mary
in the first, Sunita Menon
of Rukmini Devi Memorial
School in the second, and
Sonia George of St.
Xavier's School in the
third position.

In the Group Dance,
Delhi Public School,
Noida, excelled with
Rukmini Devi School and
Om Prakash Balvikas
Mandir following in the
second and third positions
respectively.

The competition wound up with a cultural programme dedicated to the legendary dancer, Uday Shankar. It highlighted the unifying factor underlying the different Indian dance forms in an item called 'Synthesis'—a rich blending of Odissi and Bharata Natyam.

S.S.

MY BROTHER TOUR BRITIER, Irene Andrea Martins (15)



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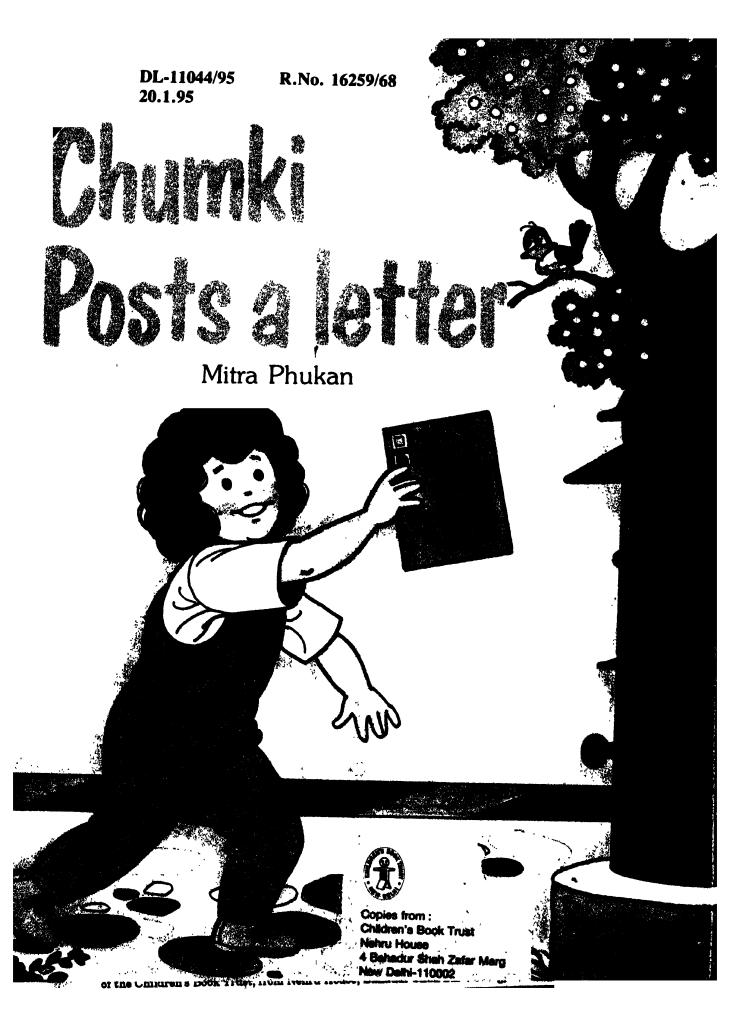
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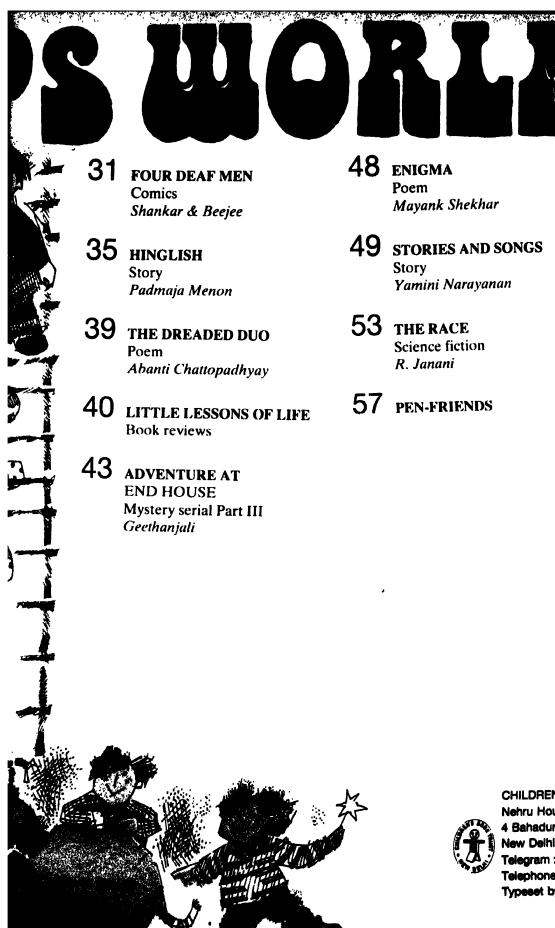
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Children's World 1995

...Dear Readers

It was a particularly irritating moment of a particularly irritating day of what had been an irritating working week when Perky arrived—or rather Raghu's poems, courtesy Perky, arrived. The poems, of course, appear elsewhere in the issue, so you can judge for vourselves. But at that irritating moment...that irritating morning...I could have hugged Raghu for being what he was or is, or whatever. For that lightning change in mood, for the total lightening of my spirits, that moment and now. I envy Perky his Raghu.

In this life full of care, if only each of us had a Raghu to share...that set me thinking...So serious, sombre and worry-ridden is our world, especially with exams looming large on our horizons, we often forget that the effort of trying, does help many of us to release pent-up

forces within our minds.

Raghu's You look like a chocolate dream / When you eat a pink ice cream, helped me do just that, that morning—I laughed aloud and all the pentup tensions just vanished from the horizon. Which in turn again set me thinking... perhaps there is a reason and rhyme in all this tradition stuff that got handed down to us as festival and celebration. Take Holi. for instance, or March madness if you so prefer to call it.

I thought I abhorred it...and always have. But the mind races back to A Memorable Holi. Snug in the knowledge that my touch-me-not-with-theickv-stickv-Holi-slosh was well-known to my peers, I stood about watching my friends 'make utter fools of themselves' as I thought of it then, when a particularly obnoxious boy-the friend-of-the-brotherkind-wiped the grin off my face, leaving in its place a gleaming,

silver-streaked monstrosity.

Angered and hungry for vengeance, I picked up the nearest bucket of scarlet water and emptied it over his head, then pelted him with balloons. gulal...the whole works...At the end of the morning I had got black paint, blue, green, red and yellow powders added to my dress that went well with my silver countenance. My smile remained silvery for many days thereafter, but I cannot recall any other day when I had laughed so much, or been so happy doing something so silly as emptying buckets of coloured water on others!

There's something to be said for those little moments of 'letting go of yourselves' in life...This March, when the exams have taken all you have got, let Holi revive your spirits...Best of luck and Happy Holi!

Editor

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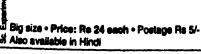


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Story: Thangamani

Illustrations: Viky Arya

JAY, will you come with me to buy colours today?" asked Ravi, my younger brother. He was so excited about his new friends and celebrating Holi the next day with them, in our new home.

"Sure thing, Ravi," I replied. I had already made up my mind not to play Holi.

After Ravi left, I went to the window. I could see the playground and the children playing there. A cricket match was in progress. "It is a short ball, pull it, you goon!" I whispered urgently, even as the boy at the crease holed out a catch! I hit the window with my fist. I knew exactly how I would have hit it. How I wished I could go and join them! But then how do I?

I mean, how do I go and say, "Hi, I'm Ajay. I have moved in here recently.

Can I join you?" I have never been able to make the first move while talking to strangers. It is always the other person. And come to think of it, that is the exact line he uses! Maybe I should try it too. But then, what if I

begin stammering?

Dr. Mehta, my speech therapist, keeps telling me, "Ajay, you have so many plus points. Why don't you concentrate on them and be more confident?"

Maybe he is right. I am



a good athlete, I have a good physique, I am above average in my studies. Sometimes I go on for days without stammering and then it starts and I can't get one word out without going like a scratched record.

Actually I stammer only when I am upset or shy. Though I am not usually upset unless my parents force me to go out and talk to people, I am almost

always shy.

"You should stop being so self-conscious about your stammer," Mother keeps telling me. "If you ignore it others would. too." But I am sure she wouldn't say it if she were the one who stammered. Anyway, all this talk is pointless since it is not going to get me friends.

Holi is my favourite festival. How does one celebrate it if one has no friends? I wish we had not moved to this house. But it is our own flat and mother says it would be a waste to pay rent when you can live in your own house. So here we are!

"Hey Ajay, will you lend me your ball? Our team's ball is lost," Ravi literally ran into me.

That kid! I wish I had his capacity to make friends. We have been here hardly a week and he



already has a team! Perhaps I should ask him to teach me how to make friends.

"You know, Shekhar bhaiyya asked me why you didn't come to play. Why don't you, Ajay? You play so much better than all those in this place. You could even be the captain!"

He would go on and on! It is nice to be looked upon as a kind of hero by your kid brother who is just ten, but Ravi can be too embarrassingly adoring at times. Anyway, how could I tell him the real reason

for not going to play?

So I just said, "Go on Ravi, take the ball and run, or you will miss the game."

I sat down to read a book, but could not concentrate on it. I went back to the window. A tall boy with specs was batting-Shekhar, I knew his name since I had heard other boys calling him. He whacked the ball and it went into the bushes at the far corner of the ground. He lifted the next one straight, being careful of the windows that ring the ground. That Shekhar

is something. We could make a great pair! And still I couldn't bring myself to go down.

The next day, I organised Ravi's colours and taught him how to fill the balloons. As I weighed one of them in my hand, I imagined myself throwing it like a grenade, catching my victim smack. I sighed loudly.

"Aren't you going to play Holi?" asked my father when he saw me going for my bath.

"Well, I am n...not in the m...mood," I replied entering the bathroom. I wished they would leave me alone. Can't they understand my problem?

Later, I took my usual position near the window. I had checked it out from the ground a few days back. If I stood to the right, slightly behind the curtain, no one could see me from below. The boys and girls were all having a ball. Screaming, throwing water balloons and pouring coloured water on each other. I tried to make out faces, but could not. They all looked like ghosts, colours smeared on their faces. I recognised Shekhar, though.

Ravi had gone early. I heard his high pitched voice and again envied his ability to make friends so easily. Oh, to be ten again!

Suddenly I was afraid. What if the boys came into the house to drag me out? We did it all the time in our old neighbourhood if someone refused to join the Holi festivities. I knew I would start stammering and then they would all laugh at me and go away...Oh God, I couldn't bear to even think about it.

I was still thinking of the horrible possibility when I saw some commotion on the other side of the ground. One of the smaller boys was crying and pointing his finger at Ravi and a bigger boy, probably his brother, was shouting at Ravi. Ravi was saying something and wiping his eyes. I knew something was amiss.

In a wink I was out of the house and racing down the stairs. When I reached the ground, the bigger boy was menacingly advancing towards Ravi, his hand raised. Ravi cowered in fear. Then he saw me and ran towards me.

"Ajay, one of my balloons hit Pappu where he has a boil and the boil burst. His brother is scolding me for it. I didn't break it. Ajay, tell him I didn't even know he had a boil! He is going to beat me now," he sobbed.

I was so furious, I didn't know what I was doing. I put Ravi away from me and went to the boy who was still shouting that Ravi deserved a beating.

"Look here, you lay a finger on my brother and I will thrash you." I couldn't recognise him from the usual crowd of boys who played cricket.

"Can't you see my brother is in pain?" he asked.

I couldn't believe it!
Here was a big boy, about
my age—fourteen—acting
like a complete idiot.
Didn't he know Holi was
meant to be all rough and
physical?

"If your brother was unwell, he shouldn't have come down to play, should he? And Ravi says it was a mistake and that he is sorry. Why do you go threatening kids less than half your age? Pick someone your own size. Are you interested in a fight?"

He gave me an appraising look. I was a head taller than him and much larger. "Okay, okay. Tell your brother to leave Pappu alone. I will not leave him the next time."

"Oh, yeah?" I walked in front of him and stared him down.

"Come, Pappu! Let's go," he hastily pulled his brother away.

"Hey, we saw that!
Raghu is the colony bully.
The kids are so scared of him that they never play with Pappu, lest Raghu come and beat them. We usually gang up to fight him. He can pack a mean punch. You are the first one to stand up to him alone. Bravo!"

I looked around. A
whole crowd of coloured
figures were standing
around me. I smiled. Then
I realised that I had not
stammered once when I
was threatening the bully!
I was afraid to talk now,

though. But I had to reply Shekhar.

"Th...thank you. I...I am Ajay." Oh no! There I go again! And now they would all end up laughing at me.

But none did. I was sure they were hiding smiles, or at least snickering. I looked at them defiantly. But no one seemed to have noticed. Perhaps they were too polite to say anything. Maybe, just maybe, Mother was right and that it was I who made people notice my stammer by my behaviour and attitude...

"I am Shekhar," said the boy with the specs. "I am so glad you came down. Why don't you join us?"

Before I could answer a balloon caught me on my back and then several hands were smearing colours on my face, shirt, hands...

"Hey, wait. Let me at least get my colours and balloons," I shouted, with no trace of my stammer.

And then I knew I would be okay.

I am going to work on my speech much harder. I have never felt more confident about myself, thanks to my kid brother and Holi.



Festivals and fairs

Merry Mondiof MARCI

Text: O.P. Bhagat

EBRUARY has some hints of spring. There are new flowers in the gardens. In the fields the mustard is in bloom.

Some trees blossom before they get new leaves. One of them is the mango. To Sanskrit poets its flowering is one of the signs of spring.

In the South the trees flower earlier. This is because the peninsula is nearer the equator. Spring comes there almost two months earlier than it does in the North. It reaches Himachal and Kashmir by April.

Though there are more flowers, yet much of February is cold. It is often misty, even foggy. Fresh snowfall in the Himalayas may make people in the plains shiver

Illustrations: Beejee

again.

But with March the sky changes. There is less of cold; old leaves fall and new leaves begin to appear.

More birds chirp and call. The animals that lay asleep in winter wake up. Butterflies flit in from nowhere. Other insects buzz and hum.

In fact, all of nature seems to be awake. It rids itself of its sloth or slowness that had come with the chill of winter. It looks fresh and new.

Once shy, spring now boldly steps forward.

Men too respond to the change. They peel off their heavy woollens and feel light. They sing and dance and try to go gay like nature itself.

The year is a kind of cycle. As the winter ends,

it comes a full circle. With spring the cycle begins anew. The trees bear fruit again. New crops are sown. There is a feeling of joy and hope in every heart.

At first the people everywhere began their year with spring. In the old Roman calendar the first month was March.

So was it in India.

Different kingdoms had different calendars. But many of them began on or around March 21. That is, spring equinox, when the day and night are of equal duration.

Now, officially, we follow the Gregorian calendar. But for the festivals and many other purposes we go by our own, old ones.

The first day of the year, according to the

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Vikram era, is Samvat day. It is celebrated like a festival. So are the first days of many other calendars.

In Maharashtra the New Year is celebrated as Gudi Parva. As it follows the moon, the day falls late in March or early in April.

Banners of silk and gold are put up on the occasion. They recall a very old flag-hoisting ceremony that is associated with Rama's return to Ayodhya.

In Andhra it is *Ugadi*. Again the festival falls late in March or early in

April. The day is considered lucky for starting new ventures.

It is believed that the way one behaves on the day will set the pattern for the rest of the year. So everybody tries to be nice and pleasant.

About the same time Goa has its Carnival. Music and dancing go on for a whole week. Masks, costumes and floats lend it a lot of colour. Gaiety is everywhere—in the streets and on the beaches. People go there from far and near.

The Parsis who follow the Nasli calendar have

their Navroz, New Year's Day, on March 21. There is much feasting and alms-giving then.

Naw Ruz, the Baha'i New Year, also begins on March 21. To the followers it speaks of renewal and spiritual growth.

March 21 is also World Forestry Day.

In England, March is a cold month. Yet spring is hailed there on March 21. April has more colour there. But it is May which is celebrated as a merry month.

It is the same in other cold or colder countries. As the winter is long and



harsh there, it was in the past pictured as an evil spirit.

In a Russian tale, winter is a witch who lives in a bleak, icy palace. She lets nothing bright or cheerful come there.

The Germans burn winter's effigies to usher in spring. In New Mexico it is Old Man Gloom who goes up in flames.

The forms differ, but the joy in welcoming spring is the same everywhere...

Ten p.m. As you lie in bed, from the distance comes the sound of music. A TV or radio programme? No. It is the labourers singing in their camp by a road.

They are singing songs of *Phagun*. Holi, the festival of colour, falls on the full moon day of the Indian month of *Phagun*.

The songs tell of the beauty of the month, of the red and yellow clouds of gulal (Holi powder) in the air and of the festive frolics of Krishna.

Such singing begins a week or two before Holi. As the festival draws near, concerts of Holi and spring songs and dances are arranged. Dancedramas centring round Krishna are also staged.

Then there are sessions



of humorous poetry. And murkh sammelans (fools' gatherings). Plus Holi milans (get-togethers) where people of all religions meet and eat together.

At the stalls are displayed syringes and sprinklers for spraying rang (coloured water), and small balloons. Children fill them with water and hurl them like handgrenades.

In bloom around Holi is the tesu or palas (flame of the forest) tree. It is laden with bunches of orange flowers. Their dried petals colour the water.

Those who like to celebrate Holi in style squirt the fragrant tesu water at their friends and

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guests. Or they sprinkle rose water from small, long-necked flasks. Some use only gulal.

On Holi-eve are made bonfires in open places. Round them people sing and dance. Several tales are told to explain this. One of these is the legend of Prahlada.

Prahlada was the son of Hiranyakashipu. The king enjoyed the boon that neither man nor beast would kill him. This made him so vain that he forced his people to worship him.

But his son said that Vishnu was supreme. Hiranyakashipu was enraged. He told his servants to kill the boy. But every time they tried, Prahlada had a miraculous escape.

At last Hiranyakashipu plotted with his sister. Holika too enjoyed a boon. It was that fire would not burn her.

She perched on a pile of wood. Then she asked Prahlada to come up to her. The boy obeyed. As he sat on his aunt's lap, the pile was lit.

Flames enveloped both. But when they died down, Prahlada looked as before. It was Holika who had been reduced to ashes. She had forgotten that she was safe from fire only if she sat alone in it.



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The festival's name comes from Holika. The singing, dancing and colour-throwing on the day calls to mind the people's joy at seeing Prahlada unhurt.

Many Holi songs are about the boy Krishna. Govind or Gopal (divine cowherd), as he is called, then lived at Gokul, a village of milkmen. He played his magic flute and frolicked with the other gop-gopis.

On Holi he and his friends enjoyed themselves with songs, dance and colour. Painters depict Krishna's revels to this day. So do dancers in their own way.

Holi is still celebrated with the same fervour in Braj, the area around Gokul. It has sidelights like fire-walking. At one place, in fun, women hit men with *lathis* (sticks).

Shanti Niketan celebrates Holi amidst music and dance. For colouring only gulal is used.

Manipur has its own graceful dance form. As the people worship Krishna, their Holi songs and dances take one back to Braj.

By the way, many Hindi films have Holi scenes. There you see the festive fun, singing and dencing at its colourful best.

While others in Punjab celebrate Holi with colour, the traditional Sikh warriors, Nihangs, do it quite differently. They hold tournaments of martial games.

As a colour carnival, Holi is not celebrated in the South. But at places it is celebrated as Kamadahan, the burning of Kama.

Kama is the Hindu god of love. He is very close to Vasanta, the god of spring. Once, with Vasanta to aid his effort, Kama went to disturb Shiva while the great god was deep in meditation.

The arrows of love Kama shot, angered Shiva. His third eye (on the forehead) opened. From it a flame leapt forth. It burnt Kama to ashes.

His wife, Rati, wailed for long. Moved by it, Shiva granted that Kama would live again. But it would be in bodyless form.

Immediately after Holi, Rajasthan has Gangaur. It is a festival for maidens and married women. In the centre of celebrations are Shiva and Gauri (Parvati).

Shiva and Parvati are an ideal couple. Girls wish for husbands like the god. Married women pray for marital happiness like the couple's.

Rajasthani costumes are colourful. At Gangaur you see the women in their best cholis, lehngas and odhnis. As part of the festivities they go out in a procession.

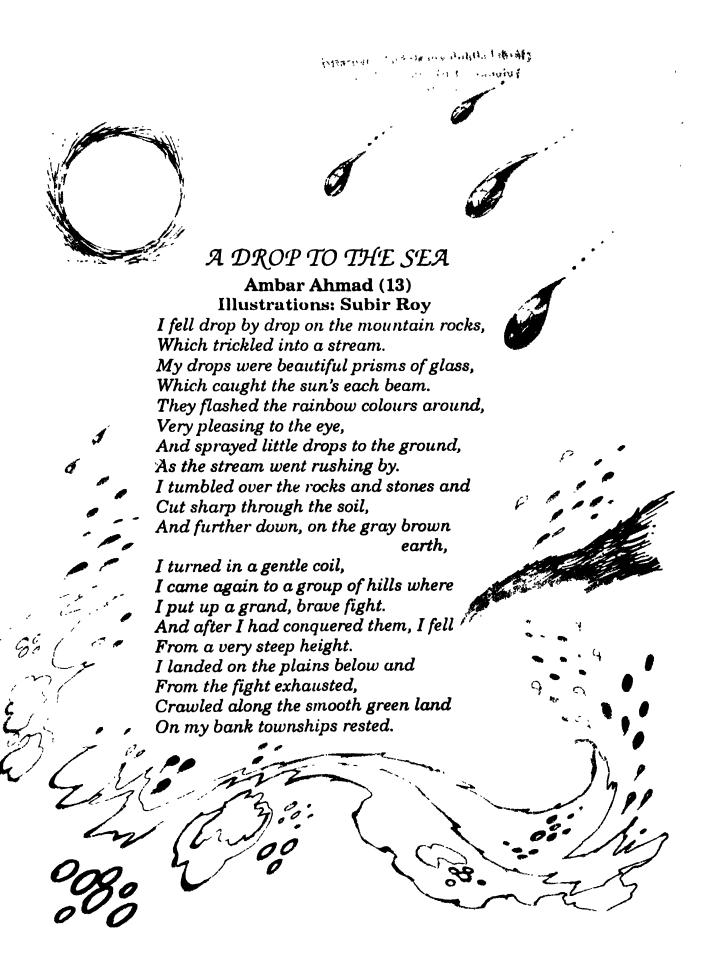
An image of Gauri is also carried high on the heac A band plays in front. Decorated horses and palanquins follow. The festival lasts more than two weeks.

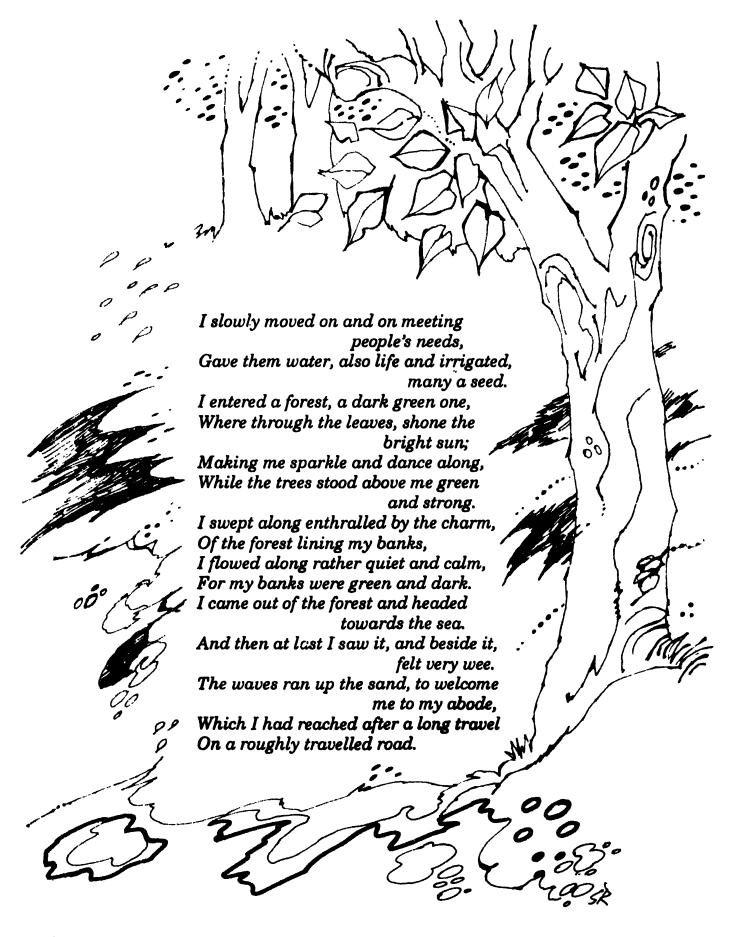
In the tribal areas around Mt. Abu it goes on for a whole month. Youngsters are then allowed to choose their life partners. For once nobody minds the running away of a girl with a boy.

Apart from its song and dance, spring rings wedding bells for many.



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Dear snakes and ladders and stars and suchlikes.

If life is a game of snakes and ladders, then I don't seem to find any ladders at all lately, not a nail, not a grain of wood, not even the crushed grass where once the ladder stood. But snakes! oh yes, I've seen plenty of those. Plenty. Snakes and rats and small, slinky things that won't face you in the moonlight but run and hide behind apes and baboons and... Anyway where are all the ladders gone? That's my question.

"Ladders? What ladders?" asked Raghu. "You mean you still believe that snakes and ladders stuff? You must be mad. What you need is enterprise. Enterprise. And the ladders will start coming to you on their own."

I imagined a whole group of ladders, some tall and some short, walking towards me. Would they come slowly or would they move fast? How would they walk anyway? From side to side probably because their legs would naturally be all stiff and straight. Or would ladders that walk have joints? In which case...

"...send it off. That's what I would do if I were you. But you've never had any imagination, Perky. No imagination and no enterprise."



ing down to me as usual. "What do you mean?" I asked, "that I have no imagination? Do you even know the spelling of..."

"Listen Perky," the fellow said, not paying any attention to me. "Just send these off and see what happens. Just see... that's all I say."

'These' turned out to be some sheets of paper that he thrust at me, crookedly torn out sheets with some horrible scrawling on them. I looked at the scrawls and at Raghu sitting on my bed with a look that reminded me of pigs when their backs are scratched. Not that I've ever scratched a pig's back but I'm good at imagining things—you know that, don't you?

Anyway, I tried to make out some part of that horrible scrawl. The writing was all in lines of four, they seemed to be verse, rhymed verses, poetry! Raghu trying poetry!!!

The first four lines seemed to be saying something like this.

You are like my parachute in the sky If I open it, I can sore very high My parachute will drop me gently on the ground Then I'll get ready for the second...

"Second what?" I asked, trying to read Raghu's atrocious handwriting which had also got mixed up with a lot of smears and blots. "Second... what... n...o...c..."

"You ass," he said.
"Think of what rhymes with 'ground'. How can it be noc... whatever that means?"

"Rhymes with ground?"
I tried to think of rhymes.
"Bound, cound, no,
d...e...found, gound... no...
ground, hound... Is it
hound?"

"You are extraordinarily stupid," Raghu barked.
"How on earth do you call yourself a writer? How can the word be 'hound'?
What is a 'second hound'?"

"I don't know. How can I know? It's *your*... verse... or worse... or whatever."

"It's 'round'," he snapped. "The word is round. Get ready for the second round."

"Second round?" I asked. "What second round?"

Raghu snatched the sheets of paper from me. "The second round," he said, controlling his voice as if he was talking to a particularly dimwitted child of four, "the second round is the second verse. Listen to it..."

He cleared his throat. And began to read, holding the sheet away from him and making dramatic gestures with his other hand and dramatic faces with his face.

"My second round will tell you please The way you smile while eating cheese And when you eat an

Your face is just like a dream."

He paused and then read the last two lines again.

icecream

"And when you eat an icecream

Your face is just like a dream."

"Something wrong here," he said, and sucked his cheeks in, like a great big artist or something. "The rhythm is not right. Hmm, I have to redo this line before you send it."

"What do you fnean before I send it?" I asked, quite alarmed. "Send it where? And why me?"

"You send it to that editor friend of yours," he said irritably. "The one who thinks you are such a great writer. Just tell her it's your best friend's poetry. And see what she says. She'll probably ask me to write a book."



"A book?" I asked, almost falling off my chair. "What do you mean, a book?"

"You don't know what a book is? A book is a thing made of paper and..."

"Of course I know what a book is, Raghu," I said angrily. "What I'm trying to say is that my editor friend edits a magazine. She is not a publisher of books."

"See!" he said triumphantly. "This is what I

mean. You have no enterprise. Of course she edits a magazine. Now. But when she asks me to write a book, she will become a publisher. Just write to her, send her my poems. Just wait and see. See what she says."

And he thrust his silly bits of paper at me and went out through the window. "Oh," he said, poking his stupid head in, a moment later, "those two lines. Change them

You look like a chocolate dream When you eat a pink icecream'."

And then he vanished. Well. I've done it. I've sent his... whatever he calls them... to the editor. And I'm waiting. I'm waiting.

> Yours waitfully Perky -

PS My editor friend has a lot of sense It's Raghu alone who's so dense.



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LAUGH A WHILE

"If I have twenty oranges in one hand and twenty in the other, what do I I have?" asked the arithmetic teacher.

"Enormous hands," answered Sunita.



Teacher: Maya, what are you reading?

Maya: I don't know, Sir.

Teacher: But you are reading aloud.

Maya: I know. But I can't read and listen at the same time, Sir.



Teacher: What is the plural of baby?

Ajit: Twins.



Vivek: Dad, help me find the Alps.

Father (from behind the newspaper): Ask your mother. It is she who puts away everything in this house.



L. Balasubramaniam

N the banks of a gurgling brook of sweet water, there stretched as far as the eye could see, a grassy plain dotted with groves of fruit-bearing trees. On this vast plain lived a herd of gorgeous chital which grazed the nourishing grass by day and rested in the open by night, keeping a sharp look-out for their arch enemy, the leopard.

The chital's sight, smell and hearing were well-developed and they could sense their enemy from far. Any chital spotting a leopard would alert the others and they all would rint away to safety.

One day a wide-eyed fawn was born to the herd. Within hours of its birth, the fawn could stand up and graze. In a couple of days its tender legs became strong enough to carry it as fast as the best runner of the herd.

The playful fawn loved to prance about on its long, spindly legs while the herd grazed. Sometimes it would rush pellmell across the plain as if all the leopards of the forest were after it. At other times it would leap over the backs of the chital resting on the ground.

Its mother worried for

the safety of her little one. Danger lurked at every corner of the forest. Any bush could harbour death in the form of a leopard crouching in it.

The herd was led by a large male with a magnificent pair of antlers. When the fawn got too boisterous he would shake his antlers at it and threaten it. The fawn would hide behind its mother and sulk.

One day the herd was grazing in the shade of a large banyan tree. The sun was beating down with its fiery beams and the heat was getting unbearable. The fawn and its mother decided to lie

down and rest for a while in the shade.

Suddenly something fell plump on the fawn's back. Startled, it looked up to see a baby langur sitting on the edge of a lowhanging branch. Its face was entirely black and its tail so long that it hung far below it. The fawn could almost touch the tip of the tail with its nose by standing on its hind-legs. The baby langur was busily plucking leaves and buds from the tree and eating them. A leaf had escaped from its hand and had fallen on the fawn resting below.

The fawn sniffed the fallen leaf. It smelled good. The fawn licked it gingerly. It tasted even better. Soon it gobbled the

leaf, relishing its delicious flavour very much. The langur had by then dropped several more leaves. The fawn ate those too.

There were other langurs too on the tree. They dropped most of what they plucked, eating only the choicest parts. Soon the ground below was littered with leaves, buds and fruit. The chital left the grass alone and came to eat this tastier fare.

The langur and the chital became so engrossed in this activity that they did not see the leopard that was creeping in on them. Its eyes were fixed on the fawn which had moved a little away from the herd.

The leopard was about

to leap when the baby langur saw it. It let out a shriek of fear, ran and hid in its mother's arms. The other langurs and chital heard the baby langur's cries and they all strained their senses to locate the enemy. They spotted it in seconds and were away like the wind, the chital flying over the ground on their long, fast legs, the langur leaping away from branch to branch and tree to tree. In the wink of an eve they had left the leopard far behind.

The leopard came out of its hiding, furious at being deprived of its dinner. But it could do nothing about it, for the deer and the langur were far, far away, beyond its reach.



THE KNOW NO BEAR.

Text: E. Shailaja Nair

UJHE bilkul bhi dar nahin laga scared at all)." This statement, and spoken most emphatically, was the most common one made by those children who were awarded for their brave feats, this Republic Day. They came from all corners of the country from Assam, Punjab, Delhi and Karnataka. They are of all ages—from five to fourteen. But they all have this trait in common—they are strangers to fear especially when they see someone else in trouble.

Fourteen-year-old Richa Chaudhry from Delhi has been awarded the Geeta Chopra Award for warding off armed intruders who had attacked her mother with a meatcleaver. Richa, armed with just a kitchen knife, shouted for help so that the intruders were overpowered by the neighbours.

The Geeta and Sanjay Chopra Awards were instituted in 1978 in the memory of two children who fell victim to two killers and bravely fought them off to the last. The Sanjay Chopra Award this year was given to a tinytot of five, Gurpreet Singh, of Punjab who unhesitatingly went to save two babies playing on the railway tracks. Seeing a train speeding towards the children Gurpreet pulled one of them away from the tracks. He then went back for the second child but was killed along with him.

Twelve-year-old Vivek
Khare from Madhya
Pradesh saw a four-yearold crossing the road even
as a matador approached
him at high speed. Vivek
dived on to the road and
pulled the little boy and
himself to safety. Fiveyear-old Manisha, from
Uttar Pradesh, was not so
lucky. She was returning
home along with her

mother when she saw a two-wheeler heading towards a young boy. She ran to him and pushed him away thus saving his life but was herself hit by a car coming from the opposite direction.

Thirteen-year-old P.C. Lalremruata from Mizoram was washing clothes at the Chhawnzinga Reservoir when two of his friends fell into the water. One of them managed to pull himself out but the other who did not know how to swim was thrown around by the swirling waters. Lalremruata immediately jumped in and pushed him on to the steps. But unfortunately he was himself drowned. Similarly, six-year-old Surender Singh Negi of Delhi too gave up his life trying to save a boy who had jumped into the Hyderpur Canal.

Most of the children saved people from either drowning or from a fire.

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Seven-year-old Ranita Kharnaior of Meghalaya was playing outside her hut when she saw flames engulfing it. Without any hesitation she ran into her burning hut and pulled out her two-year-old brother to safety even as the hut was reduced to ashes. Similarly, eightvear-old Manjunath from Karnataka carried two toddlers out of a burning hut and then called out to their grandmother who was able to save a 10month-old baby whom Manjunath had not been able to carry. This son of a lorry-loader father and domestic help mother is unfazed at his feat of courage. What did the villagers say? "They said good," says the little brave.

Twelve-year-old Sabir
Ali jumped into a pond
and rescued a small boy.
He turned the unconscious
child on his stomach and
drew all the water out of
him till he regained
consciousness. Had he got
any training in resuscitation measures? "No, but I
had seen how they do it in
the Hindi films;" explains
Sabir. Thank God for
Hindi movies!

Seven-year-old Swati Khandelwal of Rajasthan was playing with her friends when their toy fell

into a 10-foot deep tank. One of her friends tried to retrieve the toy and in the effort fell into the water. Trying to rescue her, the other child also fell in. Seeing both her friends flailing their arms in the water, Swati held on to the wall of the tank and pulled her friends to safety. How did she manage to pull out two children when she herself is not too big? "I just pulled and pulled till they were safe," she says with an enchanting lisp.

Thirteen-year-old
Roopesh Kumar of
Madhya Pradesh also
saved a girl from drowning. The girl had fallen
into a drain which was
overflowing and Roopesh
had a long struggle before
he was able to bring her
to safety. He himself
suffered a head injury in
the struggle but he did not
give up till they were both
safely ashore.

Twelve-year-old
Mamata Borah of Assam
was plastering her mud
hut when she heard her
two-year-old nephew cry
out. The little boy had
fallen into a stream
flowing nearby. Mamata
jumped into the strong
current and held on to the
child's legs as she was
swept away for about 20
metres. Then she was able

to grasp some water reeds growing alongside and held on for dear life till the child's father arrived and pulled them both to safety. This brave girl wants to be a doctor but her family is too poor to give her much of an education. But hope springs eternal in this brave girl's breast and she does not give up her ambition. Fifteen-year-old Bikram Keshori Samantara of Orissa also jumped into a river and pulled two struggling girls to safety even as adults stood around looking on helplessly.

Two of the awardees saved themselves because of their decision not to give in to panic. Eight-year-old Prasad Joshi of Maharashtra escaped from his kidnappers and even helped the police nab the culprits while four-teen-year-old Bhupesh Kumar of Himachal Pradesh fought off an attacking wolf till the villagers came to his help.

Ten-year-olds
Shivshankar Madhukar
Bidri of Maharashtra and
Chirag Kumar Naik of
Gujarat rushed in where
angels fear to tread when
they saw their family
members in danger.
Shivshankar lives in
Osmanabad which was

shaken by a massive earthquake in September 1993. Feeling the earth shake, the boy woke up and dragged out his aged grandparents one by one, seconds before their house collapsed into rubble. Chirag's house was invaded by armed robbers who shot his mother dead. But when they trained their guns on his father, the boy ran to shield him taking the bullets himself and saving his father's life. Another of his ilk is twelve-year-old Kusum Kumari Dhakar of Madhya Pradesh who lay on top of her younger brother to shield him from the crossfire between the police and terrorists. She was injured but her

brother escaped unscathed.

Sixteen-year-old
Jatinderjit Singh Sangha
of Punjab, the oldest
recipient this year, was at
school when a swarm of
bees attacked two of the
students. Seeing their
plight Jatinderjit wrapped
himself in a durrie and
rushed to them and drew
them away from the bees.

All these children participated in the Republic Day parade seated on grand, caparisoned elephants. Even as they waved to the cheering crowds I was sure I could see some more waving hands, the hands of those who had given up their lives to save others.

THE NATIONAL AWARDS SCHEME

The Indian Council for Child Welfare confers the national awards. The awards, instituted in 1957, are declared on November 14, Children's Day, each year. The Prime Minister presents the awards in New Delhi on the eve of Republic Day. Each awardee gets a silver medal, a certificate and cash. The Bharat Award was instituted in 1987-88, for an exceptional act of bravery. Its recipient receives a gold medal, a certificate and acash.

harr

3.2

Devika Loomba (13)

Life was dull and boring in my sight,
Until you came along and made it bright.
You taught me how to live,
You taught me how to give and forgive.
You made me see the positive side,
You filled me with courage and pride.
You taught me how to laugh and enjoy,
You taught me to remove misery and

bring joy.
You made me sensitive and careful,
You made me sensible and helpful.
You made me feel emotions I had never

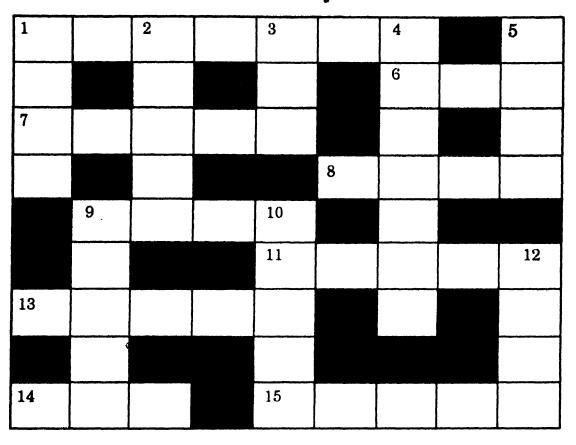
felt before,
You gave me things I always craved for.
I can still see the smile on your face,
I can still feel your happy moments which
have little trace.

I shall never forget you who made me kind,

And I shall always remember that people like you are hard to find.

CROSSQUIZ

Kamala Rajan



Across

- Selling flowers is his/her business (7)
- 6) Wise nocturnal creature (3)
- 7) Young one of a hen (5)
- 8) Adam and Eve's paradise (4)
 - 9) Cry (4)
 - 11) Choose by vote (5)

14) Complete: Yehi
hai right choice Baby...

Exclamation of triumph,

admiration or foreknowledge (3)

15) Submit, consent, give-in (5)

Down

- 1) It is the index to the mind (4)
 - 2) The branch that
- 13) A ship's tail; rump (5) signifies peace (5)

- 3) Writing material (3)
- 4) A child taking short, unsteady steps (7)
 - 5) Scheme, plot (4)
- 9) Joan of Arc was burnt because she was believed to be this (5)
- 10) A monetary unit for your thoughts (5)
- 12) Resembles a frog, but lives on land (4)



REMEMBER being told as a child that sighting a Neelkanth around Dashera is a good omen. For a long time I puzzled over which bird the Neelkanth was. Was it the common Little Green Bee-eater, Merops orientalis, the adult of which species has a blue throat? But these birds are resident and commonplace. People also call the Indian rollers, Coracias benghalensis, birds of good omen, because in the drier parts of the country as in Kachchh, Saurashtra and Rajasthan, this bird does in an appearance

around this time of the year, after having nested in wetter areas in large, gnarled trees. It couldn't be this bird either, because despite its gorgeous, blue wings and tail, the Indian roller does not have a blue throat.

Much later, when I became more familiar with birds, I suddenly discovered the Neelkanth. It was the European or Kashmir roller, Coracias garrulus. Everything about this roller makes it a lucky Dashera darshan. It certainly has a lovely shade of pale blue on the head and undersides

contrasting with its chestnut back. Also, it is a bird seen only around Dashera, for this species, like a few others, is a migrant, passing through from summer breeding grounds in Baluchistan and the valleys of Afghanistan and Kashmir onto East Africa.

Beyond India, the European roller is a summer breeding visitor to the Mediterranean and eastern Europe across Turkey and Iran upto Central Asia. From there, each autumn, the rollers fly south over Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and

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Gujarat and then across the Arabian Sea to East Africa where they spend the winter. The return journey in March and April is along River Nile and the Red Sea, back to its summer haunts. We in India, could well call this bird the "Dashera Roller".

About the size of a pigeon but more slender, the 'Dashera bird' can be seen perched on telegraph and electric wires outside cities. Specially large concentrations gather over millet and bajra fields and grass preserves or can be seen perched on small trees in the secondary thorn jungles of "Kotar lands" along rivers. Kachchh would be an ideal place to see this bird, while a visit to the Hingolgadh Education Sanctuary would be particularly rewarding because the sanctuary protects vegetation of the type the roller favours. The electric wires also pass over this area providing the exposed perches that the birds find so convenient to use.

The flight of the European Roller is buoyant and strong. Many of these birds will be seen flying effortlessly west, feeding on the way, capturing large flying insects on the

wing. They also like grasshoppers. Small lizards and locusts which are a species of grasshopper, are eagerly eaten. Whenever conditions are favourable for flight, they take off to continue their onward journey.

In the vale of Kashmir, this roller nests in the holes of ancient trees as well as in suitable recesses on large, old buildings or cliff faces. It is this time that its trivial (English) name as well as its scientific (specific) name are seen as being relevant. The birds display by flying around, "rolling" from side to side and tumbling and diving in crazy aerobatics, flaunting the blue of their wings and tail, making loud, harsh sounds all the while as though gone quite mad. No wonder they are called 'garrulous rollers '.

Our resident Indian roller looks very nondescript and quiet in comparison but has even more gorgeous, blue wings and tail which flash brilliantly when in flight. In March and right through the hot season, it also goes crazy with its noisy displays that are very similar to those of the European roller.

In India, we have one

more species of roller, the Broadbilled roller, Eurystomas orientalis, which as the first of the generic name indicates. is less closely related to the other two and, as suggested by its specific name, is a bird of the oriental region. This is a forest roller and to see it, one would have to visit the foothill forests of the Himalayas, the hills south of the Brahmaputra and on the Myanmar (Burmese) border as well as the heavy rain forests of the Western Ghats south of Goa.

Unhappily, the thoughtless planting of Gando Baval of Prosopis juliflora all over Kachchh, Saurashtra and the districts of Banaskantha and Sabarkantha as well as large tracts of the Bhal has reduced the habitat of the Dashera bird. A further, very serious threat is posed by the widespread use of pesticides. If things continue as of now, in the years to come, it will be a very lucky birdwatcher who gets to sight this otherwise still fairly plentiful passage migrant.



The Lost Life Apala Majumdar (12) Illustrations: Viky Arya Why is life, My life, Your life, Such a monotony? Why does its routine never come to an end? Why isn't there excitement, hope and mystery? Why is life, the life I am destined to live, so Is it some trial, Some exile. Some tumult within my mind,

That has been brought upon me by some misdeeds of mine? Some desolation and dismalness that became too insistent, And ignored the laws of the society we reside in?

This silence. This absence of motion, Is crepitating within me; Fear is strangling me, For, perhaps, the worst of all punishments awaits me.

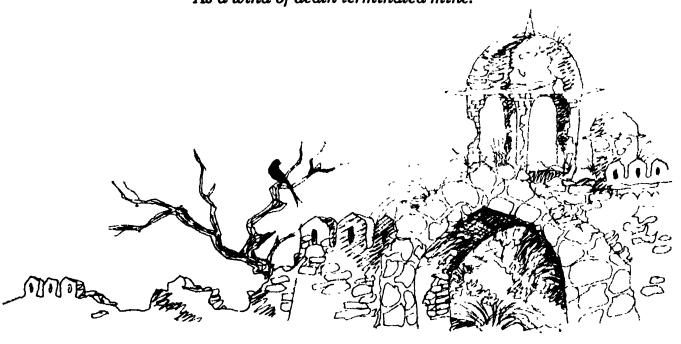
Death-Caused by the elements in nature which reign over my misty plain It is death,
The fate I had always dreaded!
My emotions have cooled,
My rebellion has ceased,
My discord has ended,
And merged into fright
Should such be the condition,
The state of one,
Once full of life?
Maybe it is,
Maybe it is an introduction to sorrow,
To one unaware of anything but
indulgence;

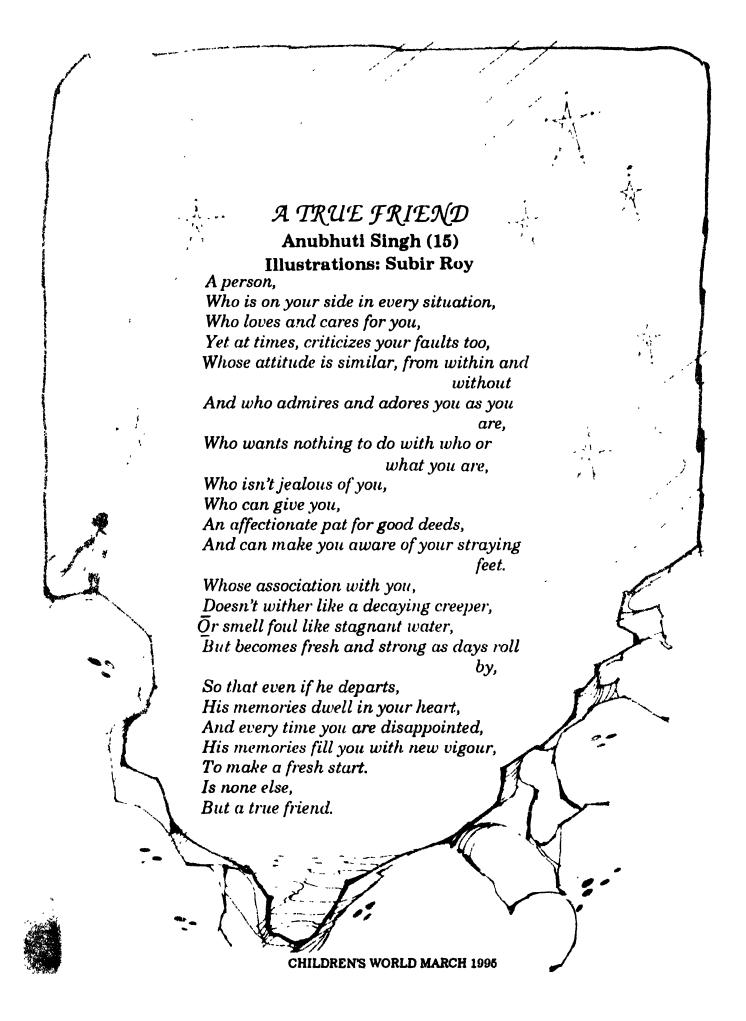
Bitter as it may seem,
I am dead!
Alas,
My soul cannot sleep as it mourns over
its death.

And the life I have lost!

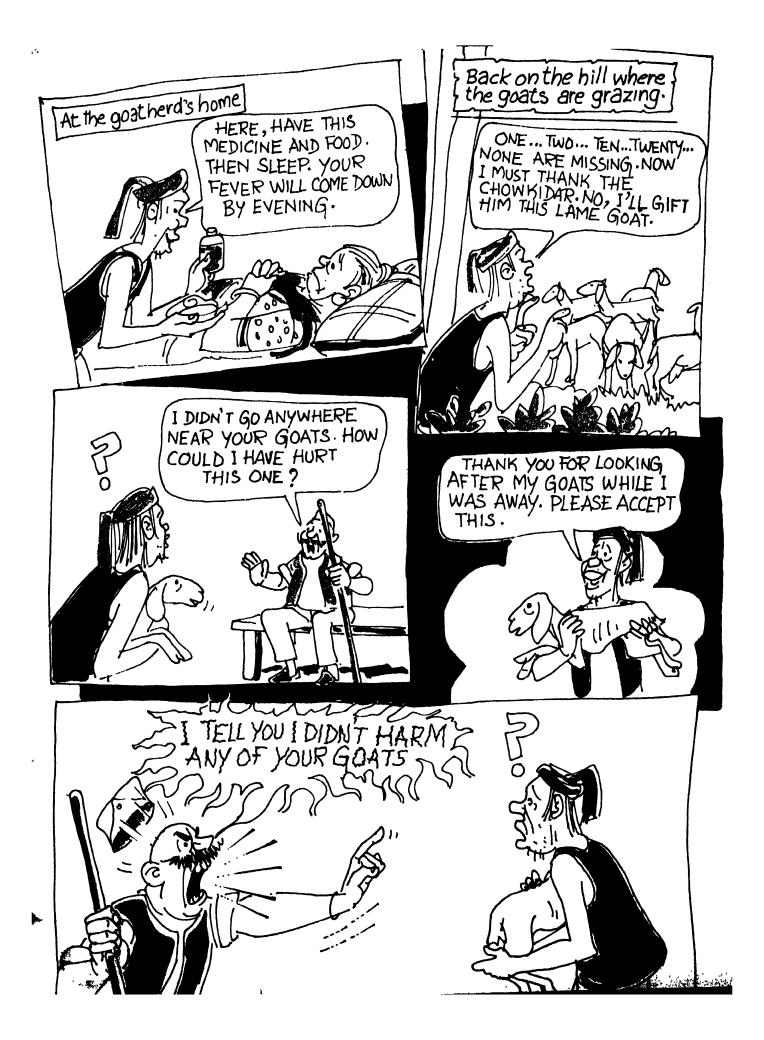
Lost in a wilderness,
In an abyss,
Where protests mingled with stifled sobs,
Had given way to the rustling of leaves,
And paid homage to the life which flourished within them,

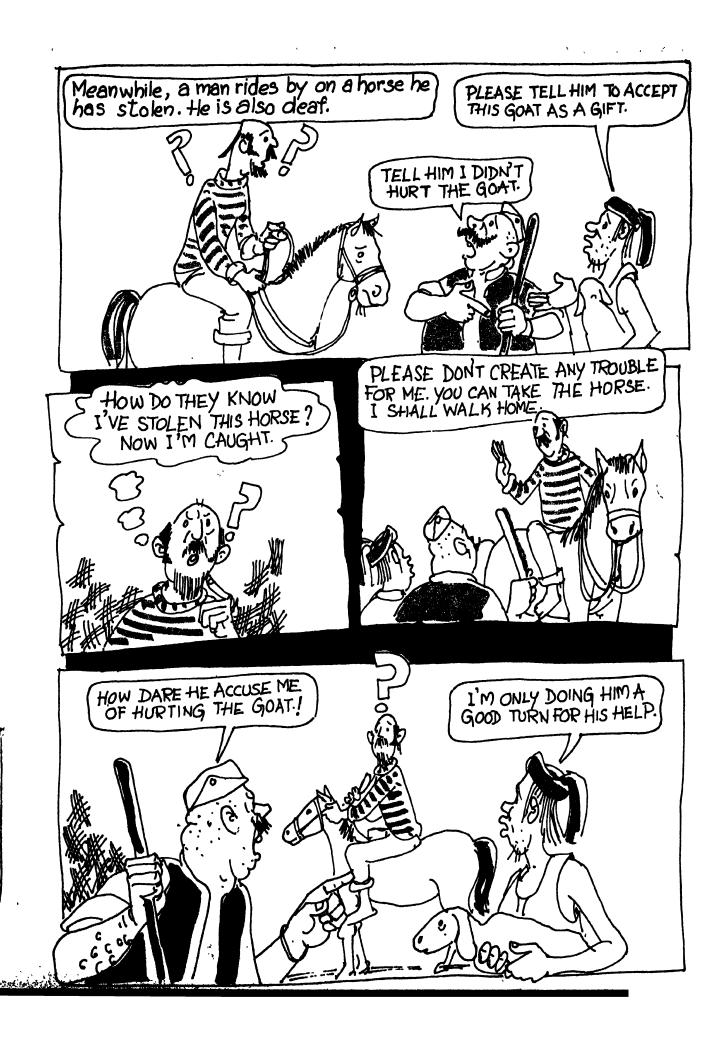
Drawing vicarious pleasure When the wind terminates their life As a wind of death terminated mine.



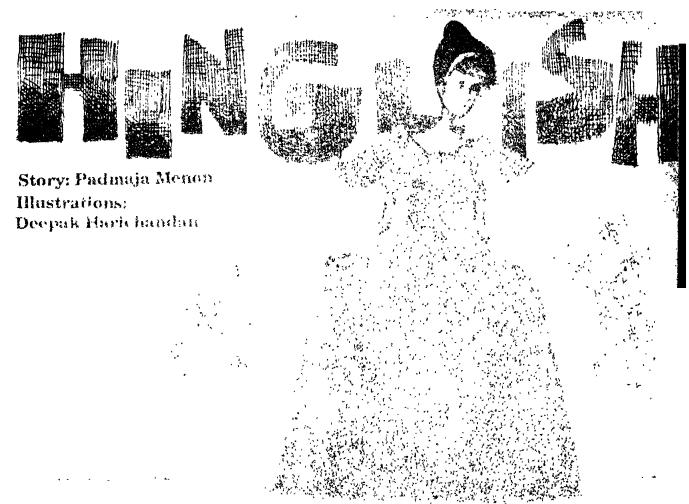












Day celebration at school. Rina was excited. She was playing the role of Cinderella. She loved to be the centre of attraction. And surely in this drama she would be the star! How she had practised. Oh, it would be so lovely!

Suddenly, Prema came running with some shiny ribbons. "You will be wearing these in your hair, Rina," she cried. She looked at Rina dressed in the shiny grey dress and preening in front of the mirror. She was not sure if she liked Rina. In fact most of the girls were

wary of her. She was too much of a show-off. But because Prema was a new girl, she trailed behind Rina and tried to be useful.

"Hey, your parents will be so proud of you! exclaimed Prema.

Rina's face fell. "No," she said vehemently, "I don't want them to come!"

Prema was shocked. "But why?" she asked.

"I don't want them to come. They are...are uncouth, they embarrass me," she whispered, her face red.

"Your parents embarrass you?" breathed Prema, in dismay. She thought of her parents—live wire Dad with his loud laugh; petite Mama, always trying to keep everyone happy, cooking the most marvellous meals, writing cute stories for children's magazines, and almost never losing her cool. How could any child be ashamed of her Dad and Mum? "But why?" she asked Rina.

Rina seemed to hestitate. "They embarrass me with their dehati looks and way of dressing. And the most terrible thing is they don't know English!" she cried at last.

Aha, so that was it. Rina's stricken face was



pathetic to watch. "How does it matter? India is not totally English-speaking. Hindi is our rashtrabasha," pacified Prema.

"You don't understand, your parents are so polished, your mother is a writer. They speak English so well. I would be proud of parents like that," said Rina tossing away all the fancy dresses and sitting down on the stairs.

Prema also did so. Now she understood why Rina showed off so much, talking in an affected tone and all that. She had an inferiority complex! She tried to recall Rina's parents. They had come for a parent-teacher meeting. They were quite an ordinary looking couple and behaved normally too. Of course they spoke chaste Hindi. Nobody seemed to mind that. Children do not notice these things. Only the snobs amongst them do.

But Rina, anxious to cover up her parents lack of spoken English, had continously answered their questions in English, thus drawing attention to them. It was then that some girls had made snide comments. She had glowered red and quickly left with her parents. After

that what happened Prema did not know.

"They won't understand a word of the dialogues, they might laugh when you should cry or vice versa," she complained.

"But Rina you are unreasonable. They will be so happy to see their daughter on stage," said Prema.

"It will not be a novelty for them. Mum is used to being on the stage. She is a reputed folk singer of Rajasthan. She has also got awards from foreign dignitaries," muttered Rina.

"Foreign dignitaries?" asked Prema.

"Yes. But I don't want them to come and make utter fools of themselves here."

Prema was silent. What could she say? Was speaking English so much of an asset? It was sad actually...

"But won't your parents mind if you shut them out like this?" she asked.

Rina felt guilty, "Yes, they would be hurt, but..."

"Listen, Rina how did your mother get awards? Do these foreigners understand her Hindi songs? No, but they recognise talent and true art is recognised without language. And anyway you should be proud of your mother who is proud of her rashtrabasha and is not aping the West like you!" Prema was shocked at her own outburst. Now Rina would be angry with her.

"Me! Ape the West?" asked Rina, shocked. "Of course, always. You know all the girls call you a show-off and a phoney phirangi".

Rina was dazed. Was it true? Did she really cut a sorry figure? She must. Prema would not lie. Why, she was the only girl who helped her, who shared her tiffin, who copied her diary, sharpened her pencils and stood up for her. And she? She had ridden rough over her, as she did with everyone including her parents.

Her mother, though dehati was her mother and as loving as they come. Father also was busy with his work but always had time for her. And they loved attending functions at school. She must have hurt them when she had asked them not to come to the Annual Day celebrations. How selfish she had been, and how heartless. How could she? Suddenly her throat felt choked and she burst into tears.

Prema let her cry, now that the false dam of vanity had burst, everything would be cleared up.

After sometime, both of them got up.

Rina held out her hands to Prema. "Thanks," she said "and sorry...I hope you will be my friend forever," she said clearing her throat! Prema squeezed her hands tightly and nodded.

The hall resounded with applause as the curtain fell. The Annual day was a grand success. All the parents beamed with pleasure.

Cinderella came flying upto her parents and

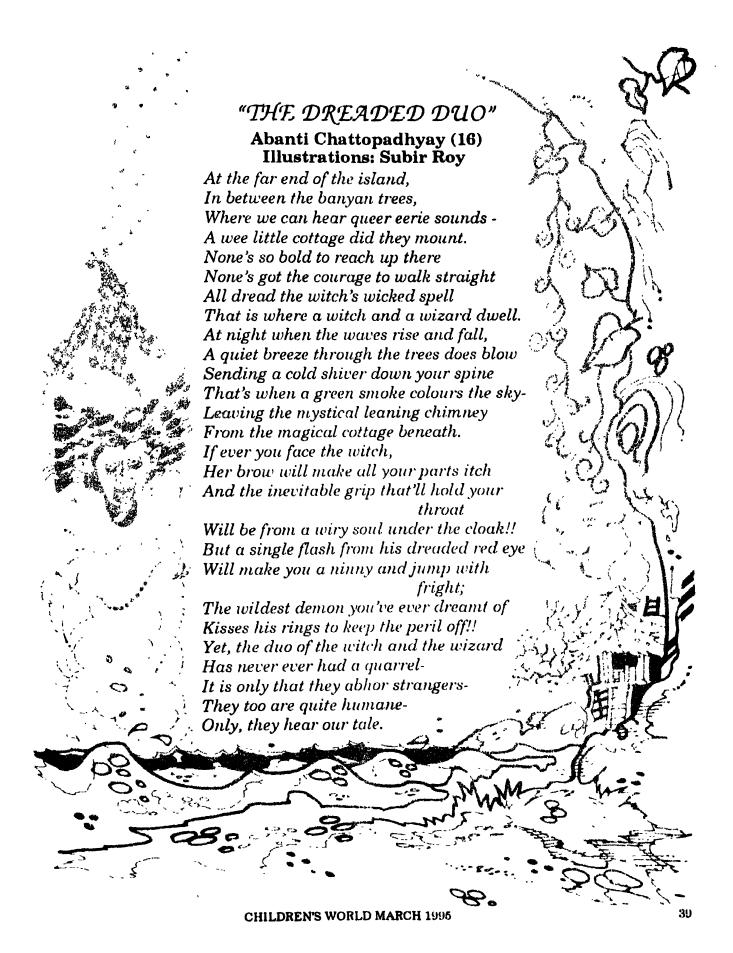
asked, "Ma, main kaisi thi main kaise thi?"

"Bahut acchhe bache, bahut acchhe," they said (very good child, very good).

Prema, smiled.

The strains of jana gana mana were heard as the audience stood up in respect...





Little Lessons of Life

Everyday Tales
By Deepa Agarwal
Published by Harper
Collins Publishers
India Ltd.
Price: Rs.40.

Deepa Agarwal's Every-day Tales is just what the title professes to be—stories of day to day life with events set in ordinary homes, everyday situations. These stories have been published separately at different times as has been acknowledged by the author.

The collection makes interesting reading. What appeals, is the deftness with which sensitive situations are handled. One can understand Pooja's anguish in A Strange Day's Story as she is torn between her loyalty for her mother and her father, who are now divorced. Nita's decision **not to participate in The** Fat Girls' Race because she feels it is humiliating to be laughed at, is as

40

natural as Sumit's resolve to run away from his failure at school and his father's anger in *The Day I Ran Away*.

Life's victories are not won on the battlefield alone. Everyday brings moments of crises. Individuals have to rise to the challenge. At times, it is the quiet and insignificant people who show remarkable maturity. Richa takes A Tough Decision and carries it out, risking her friend's annoyance. In the face of certain defeat, Anshu gives the champion a difficult time and makes her earn her title. It is a case of Loser Takes All. Chikee's inexplicable behaviour in Lakshadweep Mystery suddenly becomes clear in the light of his earlier experience. Tina learns to hide her disappointment and goes ahead with the plans for Christmas, only to be rewarded at *Home* for Christmas. Sometimes 'strangers' are really

helpful as Poorva's experience tells her in Never
Talk to Strangers and
Mitu has to thank Zoya
Aunty for her Odd
Weekend.

Deepa Agarwal conveys that winning is not the ultimate gain. It is essential to try hard, to stand up for one's beliefs and not be cowed down by circumstances. She speaks from the child's viewpoint and she speaks well. Only in two stories, Lakshadweep Mystery and The Case of the Missing Gulabjamuns does one's interest flag.

The illustrations by Sandeep Sinha leave room for improvement. In fact, the illustration for The Fat Girls' Race showing Nita from Blue House lying on the ground with Anu from Yellow House running on is incorrect. The text clearly mentions 'while overtaking the girl ahead, they had managed to trip each other'. And later it is Nita who gets up and finishes the race.

Similarly, the illustration for *Home for Christmas* does not tally with the text. Such errors should definitely not have escaped the editor's eye.

Sudha Sanjeev

Tamil Nadu Quiz Book Compiled by Thangamani Published by Pustak Mahal, Delhi Price: Rs. 24 (Paperback) Rs. 48 (Library edition)

Quizzing is fun, whether or not you know the answers. There has been, of late, a rash of quiz programmes on television and elsewhere, and also quiz books by the dozen. While many of us may not get to participate in a quiz, we can certainly check out our levels of knowledge on topics, general and specific, through the many quiz books now available. Here is one such on the State of Tamil Nadu.

As pointed out in the preface to the book, Tamil Nadu is not merely Bharata Natyam and idlidosa. It is a State with a rich cultural and historical heritage. Before getting on with the questions, the author familiarises the reader with the various facets of

the State, though briefly. These include Tamil Nadu's history, geography, literature, dances, wildlife sanctuaries, tourist spots, personalities, so on and so forth.

The question-answer section is divided into various subjects such as 'Ancient History', 'Medieval History', 'Geography', 'Architecture', 'Festivals', 'Industry', 'Temples', and so on. There are pictures for identification, too. The answers are all clubbed at the end of the book.

While it may not be possible to answer many of the questions, the book does awaken an interest, a desire to know more about the State, while providing, through the questions and answers, a bird's-eye view of its awesome heritage.

We hope there will be more of such well-compiled quiz books of the kind on the other States of India in the near future.

Book News

Malana
By A.K. Srikumar
Illustrated by Deepak
Harichandan
Price: Rs. 20
The Twins' Holiday
Adventure
By Priti Banerjee
Illustrated by

Debendra Nath Laha Price: Rs. 16

Chumki Posts a Letter By Mitra Phukan Illustrated by Tapas Guha Price: Rs. 10

Wally Grows Up By Santhini Govindan Illustrated by Chaitali Chatterjee Price: Rs. 10

Saved! By R.K. Murthi Illustrated by B.G. Varma Price: Rs. 10

All published by Children's Book Trust, New Delhi

Here are some books to save up for your postexamination holidays, when you will be earning a well-deserved rest.

Malana and The Twins' Holiday Adventure are for older readers.

Malana has as background Alexander's invasion of India. A group of soldiers from Alexander's army are left behind in India when they fail to return from a special mission. This group settles down in India.

At this point, the story shifts to England to Jack whose father has just passed away. His mother's identity is a mystery which Jack is determined to unravel. But for that purpose he has to travel to India for his mother was rumoured to have been in this country, in the village of Malana. How Jack, along with his butler, Bradbury, and friend, Chander, accomplish this mission, makes for compelling reading.

Malana won the second prize in the category General Fiction in the Competition for Writers of Children's Books organised by Children's Book Trust.

Sujata and Dinesh in The Twins' Holiday Adventure are heading home for a quiet Christmas vacation with their parents on their tea estate. But unknown to them, they get set on the trail of some missing diamonds, a case which their Uncle Ranjit, an Inspector of Police, is investigating.

Things start happening when a quiet fishing weekend turns into a fiasco as Uncle Ranjit and their guide mysteriously disappear. The action then shifts to a neighbouring tea estate and culminates in the diamonds being traced and the crooks being taken into custody.

 provides a visual treat of all that happens to Chumki as she goes alone to post a letter for her mother.

Mitra Phukan won a prize for Chumki Posts a Letter in the category Read-aloud Books in the Competition for Writers of Children's Books organised by Children's Book Trust.

Wally Grows Up illustrates the confusion of a tadpole, who does not know what he will grow up to be. It won a prize in the category Picture Book in the Competition for

Writers of Children's Books organised by Children's Book Trust.

Saved! won the second prize in the category, Picture Book in the Competition for Writers of Children's Books organised by Children's Book Trust.

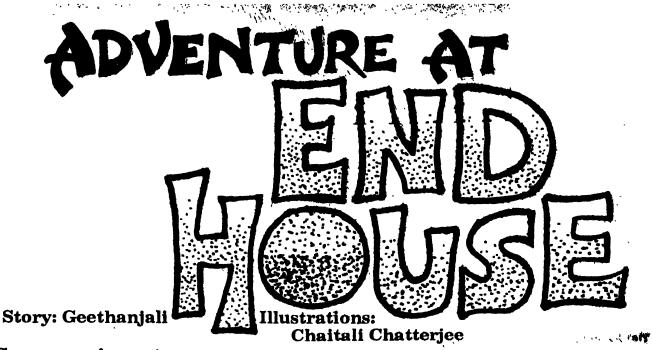
All the creatures that live on a teak tree get together to prevent it from being felled, is the story of Saved! The subject may not be novel but the treatment of the illustrations lends it a welcome freshness.

Bhavana Nair

Rachit Khosla

He-man is strong
Superman is full of nerve
Spiderman is very agile
All those heroes live in a different style
Mickey mouse is a popular cartoon
Donald Duck films are a boon
These are my favourite characters
But they do not really exist
Found on key chains, treasure chests, films
and ads

They are all over my room and even on writing pads.



Snapper is upto Mischief

Part III

Four friends, Manisha, Sheetal, Vivek and Siddharth enjoy themselves in the company of Miss Daisy, the latest occupant of End House. Miss Daisy rescues a pup, who is named Snapper—as he is fierce and bad tempered. Miss Daisy's cousin, Anita, arrives with the news that her sister, Marie, is coming to Madras to collect their mother's jewellery.

NAPPER soon had the full run of End House. Anita and Miss Daisy doted on him and he lavishly returned their love. Much to the dismay of the four children, he ignored them totally.

"Why doesn't he like us?" Sheetal asked mournfully one day,

"He is jealous of us,"
Siddharth said wisely. "He
thinks that End House is
his place and he does not
like us messing around."

Anita laughed, "I have seen many dogs but none like Snapper."

"He is savage," Manisha mused, "I think he has a wolf in his family tree. He likes no one apart from you two and no one likes him. Dr. Ray detests him. Poor Duchess can no longer sun herself on the wall like she used to. Titan is bigger than Snapper yet she is terrified of him."

"Yes," Siddharth put in, "even Mr. Mahadev was saying that Gandhi Lane has lost its peaceful atmosphere ever since Snapper arrived."

Snapper hung his tongue out, cocked up his good ear and glared at the children with his cynical, dark eyes.

"Well," Miss Daisy said with asperity, "I don't know why everyone is complaining about my dog. After all I don't complain when that overfed Titan barks her head off throughout the night or when Duchess steals fish from my house, do I? Anyway, Snapper has been a good boy. He has not been upto any mischief, has he?" She spoke too soon, for the very next day Snapper started creating havoc in Gandhi Lane.

The next day, Miss
Daisy was coming home
after her daily shopping
when she saw the doctor
doing a portrait of Duchess in his garden. That set
her thinking. "I never
knew Dr. Ray could paint,"

she said thoughtfully to the children. "I have got a wonderful idea. I shall ask him to paint Snapper."

Vivek choked.
Siddharth hid a grin. The girls looked at each other.
"Will you do me a favour, children? Go and ask the doctor if he will do a painting of Snapper."

Miss Daisy was quite unaware of the children's shocked look.

"The doctor will hit the roof," Siddharth said gloomily.

He was right. Dr. Ray did explode when he heard about Miss Daisy's idea. "What? Paint that fiend in a dog's shape? No way. My poor Duchess has not had a moment's peace since that dog came here."

Duchess had been enjoying a nap on a chair in the garden. She suddenly stiffened and leapt up, her hair standing on end. A black form came charging up the doctor's path.

"Sheetal, you left the gate of End House open. Snapper has come in here," Siddharth shouted.

Duchess stood hunched up in fear, claws out in defence. Then she gave a gigantic leap and fled inside the house. Snapper promptly went after her. He collided with the doctor's canvas. The

paints scattered and the doctor's garden became a mess. As if there was not enough colour in the place, the doctor's face began to take on a red hue.

A deafening crash came from inside Dr. Ray's house. The doctor rushed inside, with the children at his heels. Duchess was perched precariously on top of the refrigerator spitting with all her might at a furious Snapper who was doing his best to climb up. An expensive China vase lay shattered

on the floor. Dr. Ray looked as though he would burst with rage.

Vivek grabbed Snapper by his collar but Snapper shook him off. Duchess, fearing that Snapper would catch her, decided to make a dash for the outside world and the security that the trees offered. She leapt down with agility and was gone in a flash. Snapper dashed in pursuit. Mrs. Ray came in just then. She had been shopping and was laden with parcels. Snapper collided with her. Crash!



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All the parcels came tumbling down.

For some reason Duchess did not take refuge on a tree. She ran over to Manisha's house. It did not take Snapper much time to leap over Manisha's little gate, but it did give Duchess the time she needed.

Snapper followed, his paws clattering on the clean, shiny, tiles. He jumped onto Grandmother's bed. The clean white sheets became imprinted with brown paw marks.

The familiar rap-rap of the walking stick heralded Grandmother's arrival. "What is going on here?" she demanded in surprise as the four children came running in.

Meanwhile, word had gone round Gandhi Lane that Snapper was chasing Duchess. Aunt Maya hastily shut Titan in her kennel and ran to see the fun. Miss Daisy threw her hands up in horror when Mr. Mahadev informed her of what was going on. She followed the Mahadevs to Manisha's house. Grandmother was taken aback to see a crowd before her house.

"It is Snapper. He is in your room scaring Duchess," Manisha panted.

Grandmother hurried to her room and gave a

startled exclamation when she saw Snapper standing on her bed. She waved her stick at him but he was too busy trying to reach Duchess to pay heed to her.

Then Vivek had a brainwave. He ran to the kitchen and came back with the pepper pot. He sprinkled some near Snapper. Fumes of pepper engulfed the air. Snapper gave a startled sneeze. The doctor came charging in like an angry bull. He caught Snapper by the collar and dragged him out unceremoniously, ignoring Miss Daisy's indignant look.

"That dog ought to be shot," Mrs. Mahadev said angrily as she watched her husband help the doctor drag Snapper away.

Miss Daisy went pink with indignation.

Aunt Maya gave a smug smile of satisfaction, "That dog is not fit to live among civilised folk."

"Yes," Mrs. Mahadev said, "he has to be sent away."

Grandmother saw a dangerous light in Miss Daisy's eye and hurriedly changed the subject. "Where is Duchess, by the way?" This question was enough to send the doctor searching for his cat.

"I can't find her anywhere," he reported a few
minutes later and so the
hunt was on for Duchess.
Siddharth finally found
Duchess in Aunt Maya's
house busy spitting at a
startled Titan who was
backing away rapidly.

Once Duchess was found, everyone dispersed. Miss Daisy hurried over to End House to check on Snapper who was locked up in a shed in her backyard. Ten minutes later she came running into Manisha's house where the children were helping Grandmother clear up the mess Snapper had created. "My house has been broken into," she said in agitated tones.

Grandmother stared at her, "Has anything been taken?"

"No, not a thing," Miss Daisy said but there was a worried look in her grey eyes. Sheetal ran into the kitchen and got her a glass of water. Miss Daisy gulped the water and said slowly, "I think someone broke in while we were all busy running after Snapper and Duchess. Oh, I wish Anita were here!"

"Where is she? I noticed that she was not here when we were tackling Snapper," Grandmother observed.

Miss Daisy nodded,

"She went shopping—ah, here she is. Anita, our house has been broken into!"

"Really? Oh my gosh! Daisy, do you know who I bumped into just now?"

"Who?" Miss Daisy asked, her mind still on the robbery.

"My twin, Shiela," Anita said dramatically.

Miss Daisy let out a deep breath, "Shiela!
Then it must be Shiela who broke into End House."

"But you mentioned that Shiela was your cousin. Why would your cousin break into your house?" Vivek said puzzled.

Anita gave a short laugh, "Shiela is my twin and Daisy's cousin but she is a queer sort. Daisy, I think you had better explain about Shiela."

Miss Daisy was silent for a while. Then she said, "Let me begin at the beginning. Do you remember how I told you that I stayed with my aunt in Dehradun?"

"Yes," Manisha nodded,
"you mentioned the fun
you had with your three
cousins."

"That is right. When we grew up, my eldest cousin, Marie, ran away to Australia with a man of her choice. My aunt was



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furious. She washed her hands off Marie. She willed all her money to the twins and to me. As she was dying, my aunt called me to her side. She handed over a jewel box to me. She told me that she had meant to give the jewels to the twins but as she was dying, she realised that she ought to do something for her eldest daughter. She asked me to hand over the iewels to Marie when she next came to India. I agreed. Shiela was furious when she heard that her mother had changed her mind. She tried to persuade her mother to give her the jewels as she had originally planned, but she refused. A few days after my aunt passed away, our house in Dehradun was burgled. The prime suspect was Shiela."

"Where were the jewels kept?" Vivek asked wideeyed.

Anita took up the tale, "Fortunately Daisy had kept the jewels in a locker. Shiela did not get the jewels. A few months later, Daisy left Dehradun and rented End House. Shiela was there with me when I got the telegram from Marie that she was coming to India. I think Shiela wanted to make

one more attempt before Marie took the jewels to Australia."

"But where are the jewels kept now?" Manisha wanted to know.

"I kept them in a locker here. It is a good thing I did so, otherwise Shiela would have whisked them away."

"Where did you bump into this twin sister of yours?" Vivek asked Anita.

"I went for a walk and while I was browsing in a local bookshop, Shiela walked in. You could have knocked me down with a feather! She was taken aback, too. She ducked behind another lady and by the time I could go to her, she disappeared. I was surprised to see that she was avoiding me. I suppose she did not want me to know that she was here to try her tricks again."

"She must be staying somewhere nearby," Manisha said suddenly, "otherwise she could not have used the right moment to break in."

"You are right,
Manisha," Vivek slapped
his thigh. "She must have
been keeping tabs on
Aunt Daisy all this while.
When she saw that everyone in Gandhi Lane was
busy running after
Snapper, she broke into

End House."

"I bet she will try again before her eldest sister comes from Australia. After all she has no way of knowing that the jewels are in the locker," Siddharth said thoughtfully.

"We must track her down before she tries anything funny," Vivek said while Sheetal nodded.

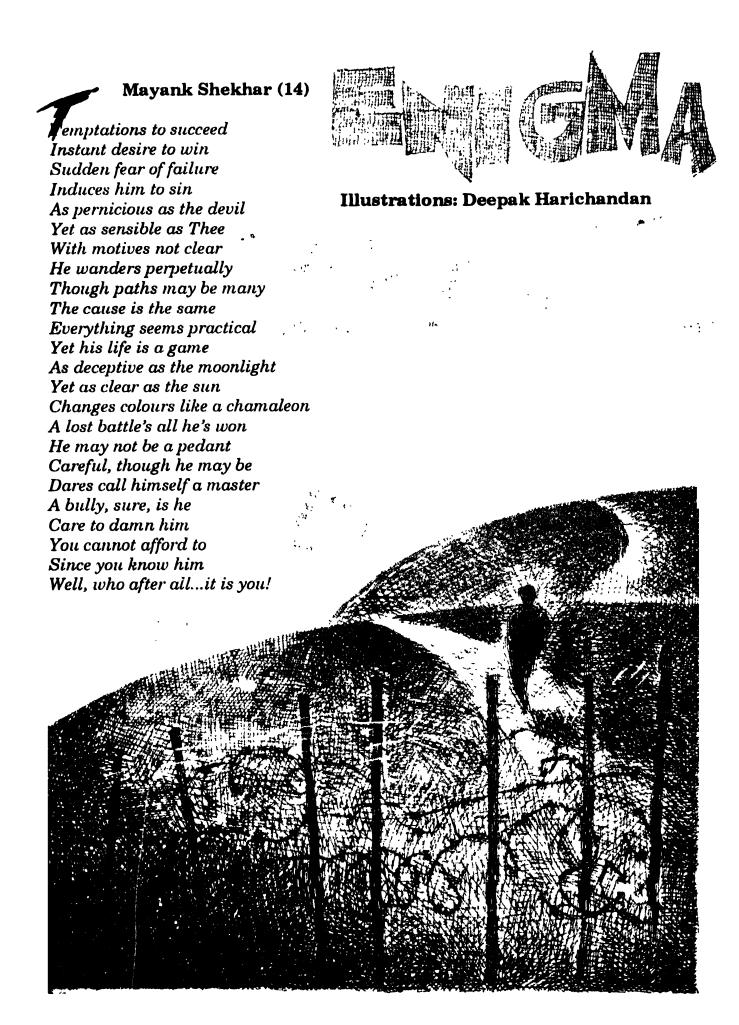
Grandmother had been silent so long but now she said with a shake of her white head, "What are the days coming to when a lady stoops to steal her own sister's jewels?"

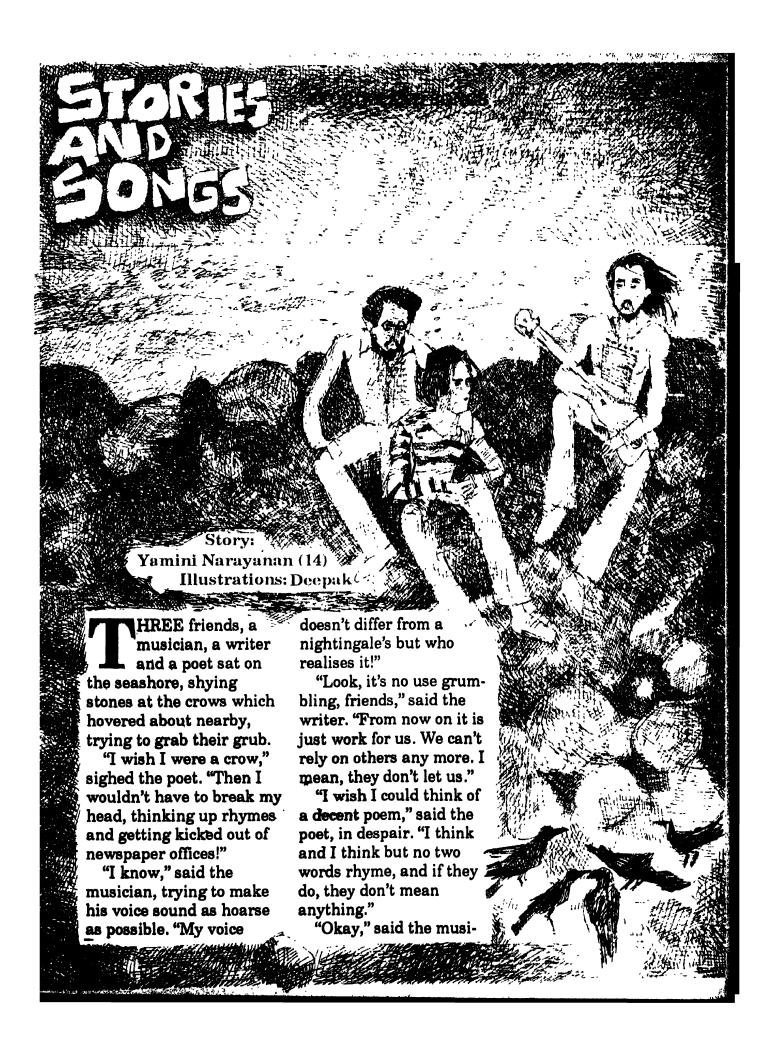
"Aunt Daisy, do you have a photograph of Shiela?" Vivek asked suddenly. "Tomorrow is a Saturday and we have no school. We will do a round of the hotels in this area and find out whether Shiela is staying in any one of them."

"I don't want you children messing up in this. Shiela can be dangerous," Miss Daisy said quickly. Grandmother nodded.

"We won't do anything silly," Vivek promised. "If Shiela is staying here, she must be at one of the hotels. There are four hotels nearby. We will just enquire as to whether she is in any one of them."

To be continued





cian. "Let's all try to whip up something and try our luck this time."

"Welcome luck!" said the writer gloomily, but he took out his pencil and started chewing it methodically.

The poet pulled his hair and ran his fingers through them and ended up looking like a harassed porcupine.

The musician made all sorts of idiotic faces, flung his arms about dramatically and then suddenly snapped his fingers. "I got it," he exclaimed.

"How nice," said the poet, disinterestedly.

"Not my own song, of course," went on Mr. Music. "Just testing my voice. Listen to me and tell me if it doesn't drip honey."

"Well," sulked the poet.
"One, two, three," went
the musician and suddenly burst into a blast,
making the other two
jump.

"The hills are alive With the sound of music! With songs they has

With songs they have sung

For a thousand years!"
The writer screamed
with laughter, "If that's
the way you're going to
sing ratily..." he cried and
want into peals of laughter again.

"What do you mean?" scowled the musician.

"I'll show you," chuckled the writer. He looked around and saw a frog hopping by.

"Here, here, baby, sweetie pie come, froggie," he crooned and picked up the mildly surprised frog, his face involuntarily shrinking with distaste as he did so.

"Sing, baby, sing," he cooed. "Lovely, lovely voice you got, froggie baby."

The frog most obligingly gave a grating, throaty croak and hopped away after its performance.

"I wonder who will win in a singing competition between Freddie Froggie and you," remarked the writer, casually.

The poet shouted with laughter and went into a giggling fit. The musician turned all the interesting shades of colours identified with the rainbow.

"How dare you?" he spluttered. "How dare you insult my voice! Plain jealousy! As if you can sing any better. I dare you to sing a note! You can only just bray! I refuse to stagnate in your company a second longer. So goodbye!" and he turned round and slouched off.

The poet and the writer laughed harder and more

helplessly. "I'll say!" said the poet staggering up at last. "Say, here we are laughing like loons when...say, have you finished writing your story?"

"You bet," said the writer, proudly opening a notebook. "Want to read it? It's a first-rate story!"

"Read it to me," said the poet, digging into a packet of chips.

"Right," said the writer.
"Listen. Once upon a
time, there lived a beautiful princess. Many princes
wanted to marry her but
she said no to all. Then
one day, a brave, handsome prince..."

The poet yawned most inelegantly. "It is typical," complained he. "One of the sleepiest things I've ever heard!"

"Pooh," snorted the writer, crossly. "Let's hear your wonderful Shakespearean sonnet."

"Right-ho!" said the poet, unfolding a piece of paper "Hear this:

There was a mole, which dug a hole.
But a big fat rat, covered it with a mat.
So the indignant mole..."

The writer guffawed. "You call this a poem!" he smirked. "You must be bats. It is worse than a nursery rhyme. Real

poems, you know, are usually so soulful and serious and full of big words etc. You know. Not silly ones with rats and moles feuding."

"You're right," said the poet, sadly. "What shall I do?"

"Same here," said the writer, in despair.

The poet stuffed the empty chips packet in his mouth and chewed thoughtfully. The writer took out his diary and started to write about the day's happenings.

"What are you writing?" asked the poet, after sometime.

"My journal," was the reply.

"May I have a look?" asked the poet.

"Help yourself," said the writer and shoved the book at him.

The poet read it in silence. "Hey, you know something?" he said, finally.

"A great many things," was the curt reply.

The poet ignored that. "What you've written now, is a zillion times better than that kiddish stuff about princes and princesses. Quite satisfactory, in fact!

"What do mean?" said the writer, sitting up.

"Told you just now," said the poet. "How did

you do it, when you were such a dunce before?"

"Well, I just wrote what happened," said the writer. "And what I felt about it. I didn't make up anything. I blabbered, really."

"Wonder if I could do it if I tried," mused the poet.

Sure," cried the writer. "Try it!"

"I will," said the poet, quietly and for the first time, set his mind clearly and started to think.

Half-an-hour later, the poet shyly showed this to the writer:

"I sat dull here Thinking of a poem to write



And as I was thinking Things appeared to be bright.

I thought and I wrote
Without any luck
I grew rude and snappy
Because of misery.
Then I wrote something
Which I thought was
great

But out of every office I was kicked And without any food, my fingers I licked.
and by chance when I
wrote something which I
felt

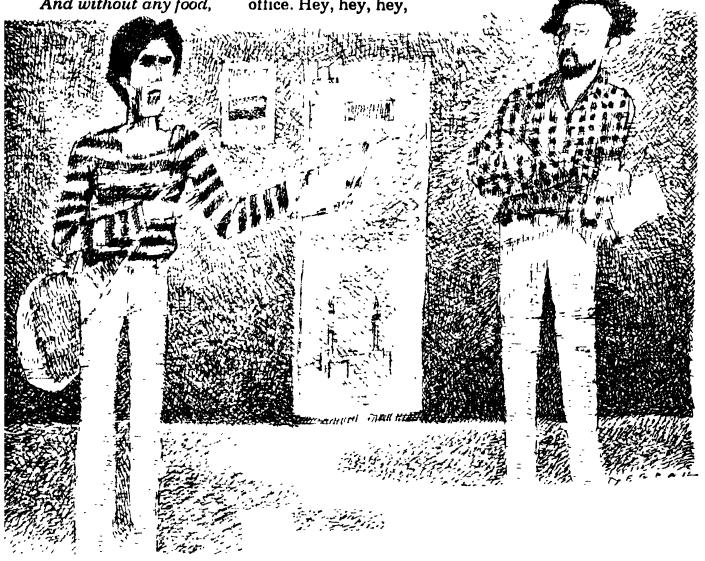
It was such a success The feeling was of sweet recompense."

"Quite nice," said the writer, approvingly. "Shall we go try our luck now?"

The two walked on hopefully to a newspaper office. Hey, hey, hey, reader, you're guessing things a bit too fast!

Anyway, you're right. I'm the writer. My friend R.B. is the poet. You know the rest.

Wait a sec! R.B. wants to put in a word. He says, "Any of you budding musicians out there to add a lilting tune to my poem?"





Story: R. Janani (17)

Illustrations: SudakshinaGhosh

HEW it's hot!" I told myself, as I wiped beads of perspiration from my brow. I looked expectantly at the sea, waiting for the Agemos. They had said they would arrive at nine o'clock. Even as I looked on, there rolled in a huge wave much bigger than the normal ones. This giant wave was followed by another and another, till the green creatures bounded out of the surf.

The building material was ready. We shook hands with the Agemos. My boss gave them their

general instructions. I would provide the details when they started the job.

Before I proceed further, let me introduce ourselves. We, the HU-MANS or Homo Sapiens, and the AGEMOS were the products of a long process of evolution. The principle of the survival of the fittest had led to a stalemate between the two races.

The Agemos lived in the sea, in underwater cities, while we lived on it. Land had been overcrowded long, long ago. So we had been forced to build float-

ing cities. Once the population had been shifted, the landmass was used exclusively for our work. Our industries, laboratories, farms and offices were located on land. All agricultural produce was a result of our manipulation of nature. Genetic engineering had led to healthier humans with greater life expectancy.

True! The Agemos were more advantaged physically. They could live on land or in water. They could run, swim, fly. Their vision and hearing were perfect. However, their mental prowess was limited.

On the other hand, we humans could overcome our physical disadvantage by making use of our superior brain power. Since we could not fly, we travelled in machines that could. We were able to compensate for most of our disadvantages.

The Agemos could not think on their own. Their mental capability resembled that of an intelligent chimp (we had a few left in the zoo). They could speak and also understand our speech. We used them for our manual work. In return we kept them living in style.

So here we were, shaking hands, explaining things and handing over to them the materials for the construction of yet another city. I was to be their superior! Not a tough job! The Agemos were hard workers and the city would be ready in a fortnight. The Agemos flew over to the materials and started working.

At precisely six o'clock, the Agemos bade us goodbye and disappeared into the water. We boarded a bus back to our destination, that is, the waiting place. There were 800 such waiting places scattered throughout the world. Each place was responsible for 100 cities.

The waiting place was overcrowded as usual. Everywhere people had finished their work and had come to board their cities.

YTI-11 and YTI-12 had just come in, and people scrambled aboard. I lived in YTI-82. It would arrive at seven o'clock, I thought to myself.

I spotted Sophia near



the fourth terminus.
Usually four cities landed together. As I walked towards her, YTI-13 and YTI-14 arrived simultaneously. She did not notice me; she was intently watching the mad rush.

"Hi, Soph! Had a nice day?" I enquired.

She turned around.

"Oh, hi! Hi Siva! Just another rotten, hellish day! It's disgusting, Siva. I mean this daily scramble. A city should be a place where we live, not like some ocean liner; and a home should be a place we look forward to going to, not like a small cabin or compartment. We have no sense of belonging anywhere."

She would have gone on, if I had not interrupted her. "Look, Soph. It's no use getting carried away, longing for the past. You've got to admit that this is better than living overcrowded on land."

Sophia was my wife, a bit emotional and hotheaded, but then I suppose, that is why I married her. She continued, "Oh, if this trend continues, we'll soon overcrowd the sea, too. Then where'll you go? We have already occupied the moon. To cap it all, there are the Agemos. Only God, if He exists, can help us!"

"Soph, be reasonable. What have the Agemos done to you? They can easily harm us you know, but they're friendly and helpful instead. We are all that are left on earth. So don't hate them!" I preached.

"Come off it, Siva.
Yeah! They are helpful
but that's because they
need our help, too. What if
they don't? How do you
think they would behave
then? I detest these
Agemos. I know you
detest them, too, though
you will never admit it.
Lord! I am waiting for the
launching of Alteds!"

"Shut up, Sophia! Don't get carried away. That is a secret and this is a public place. Anybody can overhear us. Come, our cities will arrive in a few minutes."

Soon we had boarded YTI-82 and were in the privacy of our home. At dinner, Sophia started talking again. This time I did not stop her. I was also interested, though it wasn't my line of work. Sophia was a genetic engineer with a whole lot of other qualifications, which made her one of the most intelligent scientists at her place. She never put on airs about this. She knew my interest and

filled me in from time to time without using the technical lingo characteristic of people in her position.

"So, when'll the training be over?" I asked.

"It's almost over. In some weeks they will know as much as any adult human being," she replied.

A few weeks! I was excited. I would not have to deal with those Agemos any longer. The day was not far off when we would destroy all the Agemos in one blow. The project had begun ten years ago! The quest for the PERFECT BEING! This was no wishful thinking. We had the technology. From every field, experts had got together to create them. Eight beings were developed for a start. They resembled humans in every aspect except for their arms which could also function as wings. From infancy, as they grew into adulthood, they were given training and education. Life is not a computer after all. Information had to be fed in slowly over the years. They soon reached the maximum limit of their capacity.

Now at a public function, these beings were to be introduced to the world. Millions were watching it on TV.

Sophia's immediate superior addressed the crowd that day, "Ladies and gentlemen! After years of hard work we have succeeded in creating the perfect being. He has a man's intelligence, and the Agemos's physical prowess. Now we no longer need the Agemos, with all their stupidity.

The struggle is over, my people. Evolution is complete!" After shouting this, he paused for a minute dramatically, and then continued, "Ladies and gentlemen, after ten years of training, we introduce to you the ALTEDS."

Before the applause died, the eight beings walked on stage. One took the microphone and cleared his throat, "Well! As the human said, evolution is complete. The fittest shall survive! The two races who occupied Earth were disadvantaged in one way or the other!

"On the other hand, we, Alteds, are superior to both and hence the fittest. From now on we shall multiply and rule the Earth. Gradually both humans and the Agemos shall become extinct. Isn't that so, my fellow Alteds?"

Answers to Crossquiz

(See page 25)

1 _F	L	² O	R	3 _I	S	⁴ T		⁵ P
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⁷ C	Н	I.	С	K		D		A
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PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

7285
B. Medini Rai (7)
251-B Ranka Colony
Bannerghatta Road
Bangalore 560076
Karnataka, India
Drawing, watching TV
Any country

7286
B. Srinidhi Rai (14)
251-B Ranka Colony
Bannerghatta Road
Bangalore 560076
Karnataka, India
Reading, stamps & coins
Any country

7287 Sakshi Agarwal (9) D-159 Vivek Vihar Delhi 110095, India Reading Switzerland, U.S.A.

7288
Tandin Bidhaa (15)
c/o Dorje Thinlay
General Hospital
Sarpang, Bhutan
Reading, pen-friends
Any country

7289 Sonali Nigam (11) 6/8 Sarvapriya Vihar Hauz Khas New Delhi 110016 India Reading, painting France, U.K.

7290 Kinjal Sharma (15)

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUI ENROLMENT FORM	В
Member No (To be filled by office) Issue dated Name: Mister / Miss Age 3	
(IN BLOCAL LETTERS)	1600 8
Address:	
•	
Hobbies:	•••••
Pen-friends wanted in (Country)	
*Age limit: 16 years	Signature

GIRLS

2/20 Puja Apartment Near Himatlal Park Vastrapur Ahmedabad 380015 Gujarat, India Dancing, writing poetry U.S.A., U.K.

7291
Saieli A. Talisalkar (15)
5/76 Janardan
Pandurang Wadi
Goregaon (E)
Bombay 400063, India
Medical books, dance
Germany, U.S.A.

7292
Barkha Kansara (15)
Nandanvan Housing
Society
Plot No. 179/4, Ward 4 B
Adipur 370205, Gujarat
India
Pen-friends, stamps
Any country

7293
Sreeja O.V. (10)
Othaloor Mana
Harinagar
P.O. Poonkunnam 680002
Thrissur, Kerala, India
Reading
Any country

7294
Sumi K. Baby (13)
Subi Divas
Elappully P.O. 678622
Palakkad, Kerala, India
Reading, pen-friends
Any country

7295 Simrandeep Kaur (12) J 3/56 B, Rajouri Garden New Delhi 110027, India Reading, drawing Any country

7296
Sonam Yangchen (12)
c/o Tashi Tshering
Jamo & Sherkar Co. Pvt.
Ltd.
P.O. Khaling
Trashigang, Bhutan
Collecting pictures,
writing
U.S.A., Hongkong

7297
Vanika Bhanot (13)
A-1 Mandakini Enclave
Greater Kailash II
New Delhi 110019, India
Reading, singing
U.S.A., Switzerland

7298
Vaishali Deogade (13)
Type III, Sector III
Q.No. 31/B, O.F. Estate
Chanda Dist.
Chandrapur 442501
Maharashtra, India
Music, pen-friends
Any country

7299 Latika Maryson (13) 28 Ber Sarai, Opp. J.N.U. New Delhi 110016, India Reading, stamps Any country

7300 K. Krishna Naga Kapila (13) c/o K.M. Orna Type B 19/2 TAPS Colony Dist. Thane 401504 Maharashtra, India Stamps, reading Any country

7301
J. Jenica (14)
70 E.B. Colony
Vadavalli, Coimbatore
Tamil Nadu 641041, India
Reading, badminton
France, India

7302
I. Fathima Nazreen (12)
L 15/1, 27th Cross Street
Besant Nagar
Madras 600090
Tamil Nadu, India
Stamps & coins
Any country

7303 V. Meena (13) 8/26 W.E.A., Karol Bagh New Delhi 110005, India Music, collecting leaves Japan, Bhutan

7304
Vidya Menon (10)
E-29 B, M.I.G. Flats
Mayapuri
New Delhi 110064, India
Painting, reading
U.S.A.

7305
J. Bhuvaneswari (12)
55 Ormes Road, Kilpauk
Madras 600010
Tamil Nadu, India
Stamps & coins, music
U.K., Japan

7306 Nayana A. Parab (15) Parab Wada, Shiroda

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GIRLS

Taluka: Vengurla Dist. Sindhudurga Maharashtra, India Making friends, reading Japan, India

7307
Surbhi Ahuja (15)
H.No. 43 FF
Sant Ishar Singh Nagar
Pakhowal Road, Ludhiana
Punjab, India
Drawing, reading
India, Japan

7308
Rashmi Rao (14)
3-M, C.G.H.S. Complex
Vasant Vihar
New Delhi 110057
Dance, movies
India

7309
Priyamvada Anil Loke (15)
311 Madhav Niwas
N.R. Karode Marg
Borivli (West)
Bombay 400092, India
Reading, acting

7310
Thasneem T. (14)
L/15, 27th Cross Street
Besant Nagar
Madras 600090
Tamil Nadu, India
Painting, stamps
Any country

U.S.A., Switzerland

7311 Reema Raju (12) Kanikkamatha Convent Palakkad, Kerala, India Cricket Any country 7312 Deepali Chopra (12) B-227 Yojana Vihar Delhi 110092, India Dancing, reading Any country

7313
Roshen Mary Joy (9)
VI/355 Shady Lane
Thottakkattukara 683108
Alwaye, Kerala, India
Reading, drawing
U.S.A., U.K.

7314
Ruchi Gupta (14)
16 Bhola Nath Nagar
Behind State Bank
Gali No. 1, Shahdara
Delhi, India
Watching TV, horse riding
Any country

7315
Mahe Talat (13)
c/o Nurul Hassan
La Martinere
11 Loudon Street
Calcutta 700017, India
Sewing, music
Canada

7316
Shalini Suraina (14)
B-225 Yojana Vihar
Delhi 110092, India
Painting, reading
Any country

7317
Sharina Batra (13)
H.No. 879, Sector 14
Sonepat 131001
Haryana, India
Dancing, movies
Switzerland, U.S.A.

7318
Sajeela Ismail (11)
d/o Prof. T.M. Ismail
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FORM IV (Sec Rule 8) Statement about ownership & other particulars about CHILDREN'S WORLD

I Place of publication 2 Periodicity of publication

Printer's name, citizenship,

and address

Publisher's name, citizenship, and address

5 Editor's name, citizenship, and address

6 Name and address of owners

New Delhi Monthly

Vaijayanti Tonpe

Indian

C/o Children's Book Irust Nehru House, New Delhi 110002

Vaijayanti Tonpe

Indian

C/o Children's Book Trust Nehru House, New Delhi 110002

Vaijayanti Tonpe

Indian

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CHILDREN'S BOOK TRUST Nehru House

4, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg

'New Delhi !10002

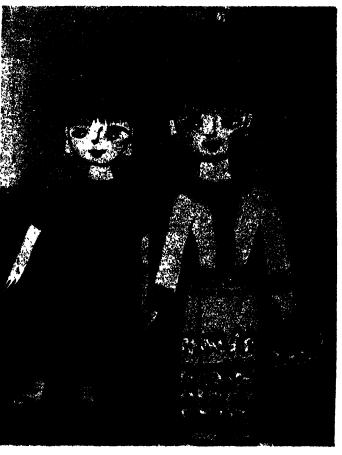
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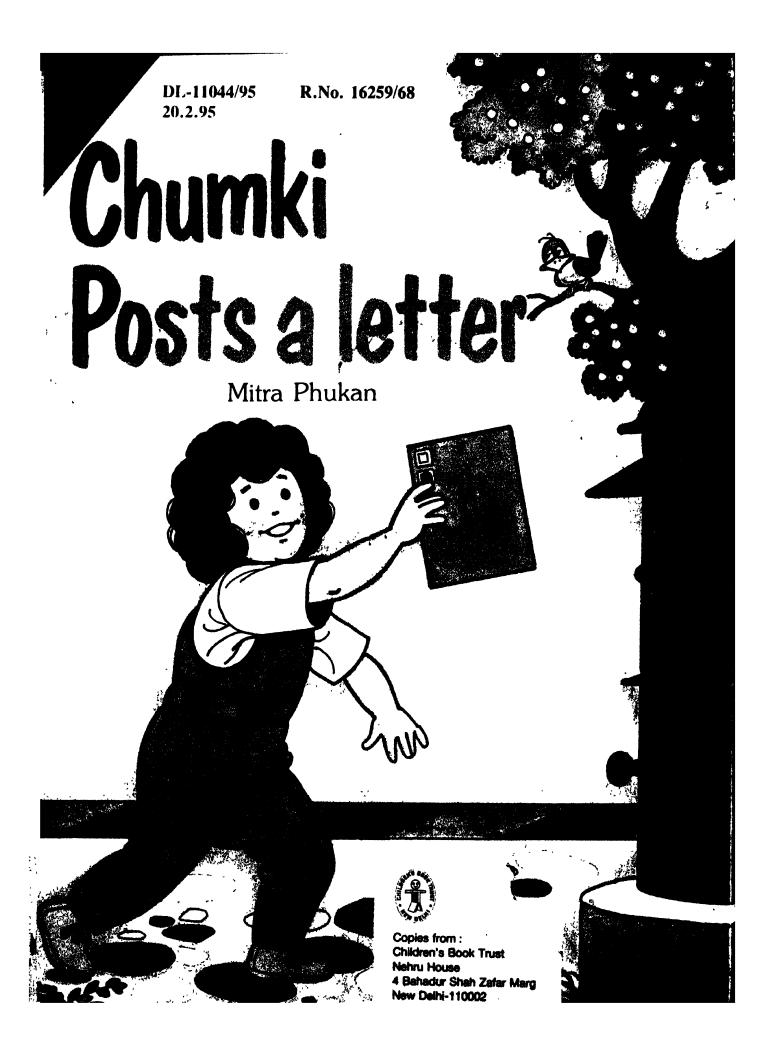
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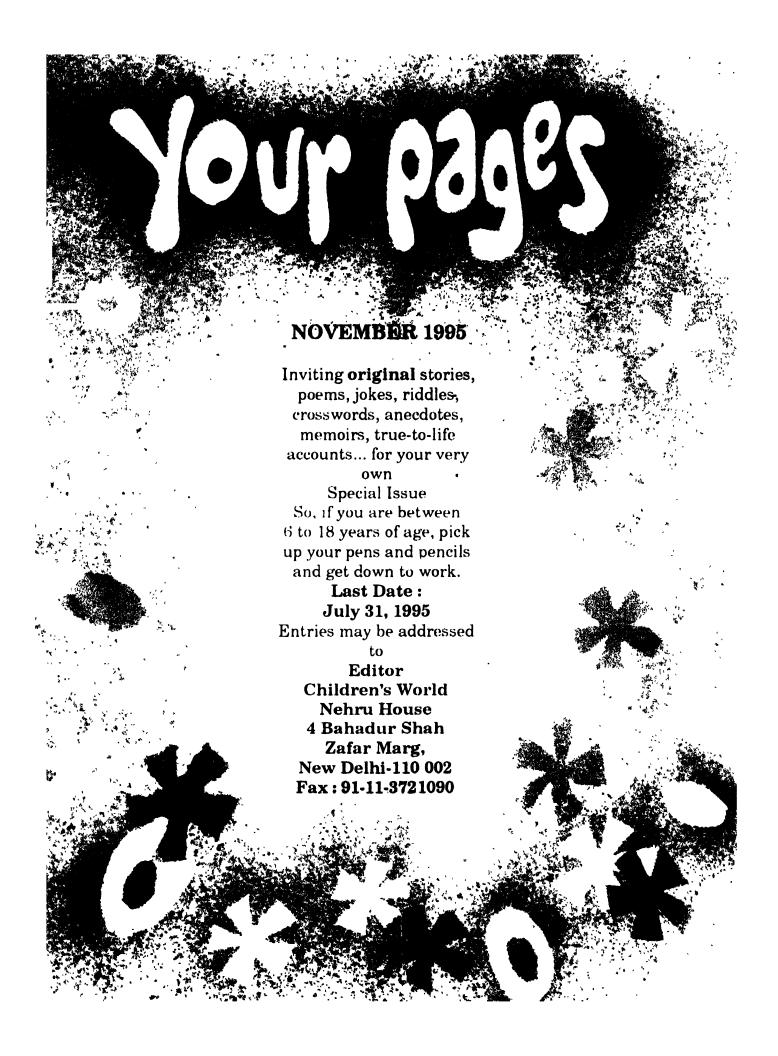
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Design and Layout Subir Roy

Circulation & Advertisements C.P. Rayındran

Area Representatives BOMBAY

C.H. Viswanath 502-A, Arun Chambers, 5th Floor, 317, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Opp.—Fort Market Bombay 400038 Telex 78050-ASCO IN

MADRAS T. Balachandran Business Representative 92, Brindavanam Nagar Valasaravakkam Madras 600087 Phone: 420290

WEST BENGAL Chhabi Chatterjee 43 A.L. Banerjee Street Konnagar Dist. Hooghly West Bengal 712235

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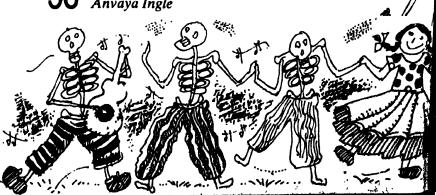
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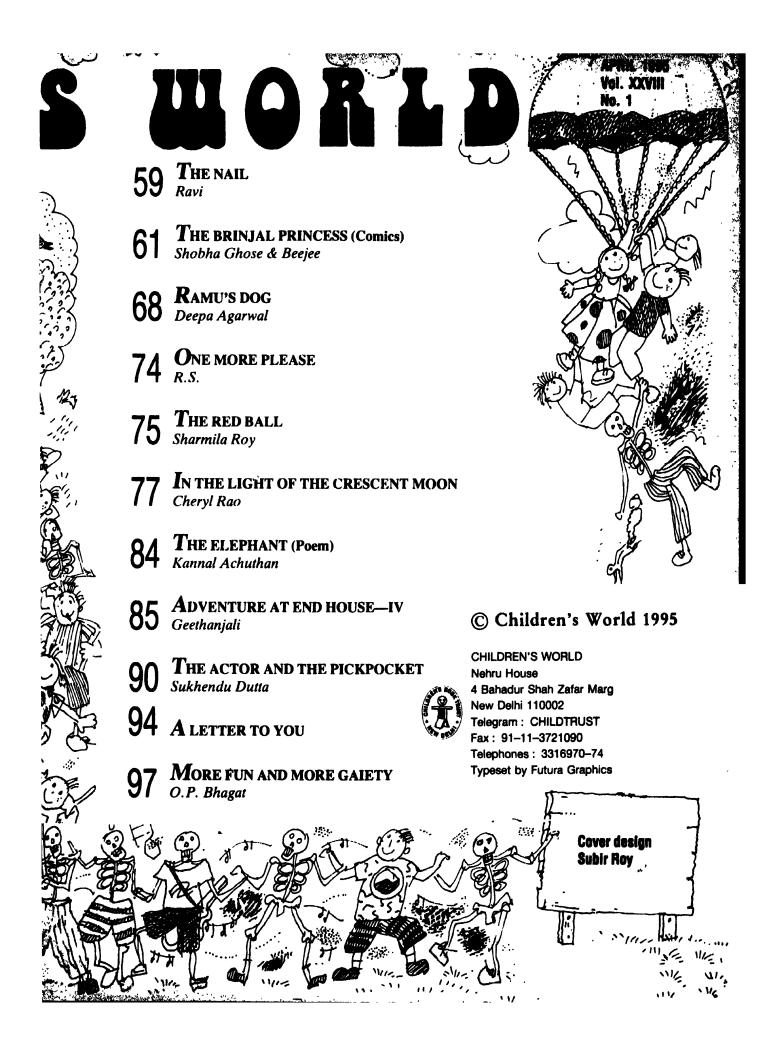
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Dear Editor...

I am a regular reader of Children's World and I love reading it. My friends were not interested in reading, but later, seeing me, they have also become regular readers of children's magazines.

Nathali, Mangalore

I am a boy of 15, living in Delhi. I am a regular reader of your magazine for the last three years. I cannot tell you how much I

Warm summer nights and whispery April breezes. Stars dotting a clear sky and fleeting fragrances of jasmine, freshly cut grass and the night queen or raat-ki-rani filling the night air. Whoever would have thought that we would give these up to sit cooped-up indoors, ogling boring. repetitive TV programmes? Preferring to sweat it out inside if the lights went off, to stretching those gettinglazier-by-the-day pair of legs. Come to think of it, ever since we've stepped into the Abbreviated Age of AC's, TV's, DJ's VJ's, E.T.'s and the whole legion, even in abbreviations which are too long to enumerate, we seem to have given up or have not known a whole way of life. And April's way of life-Fool's Day apartwould be the nights—out in the open—camp-cots lined up

like Children's World. My great love for this magazine has inspired my friends too and now many of them are regular readers of this magazine. The stories touch my feelings and in my view Children's World is the best magazine published for children.

Akhil, New Delhi

NAPOLEAN'S THOUGHTS FOR CHILDREN

Write it on your heart that every day is the best

under a canopy of stars. With whispery winds murmuring... the warmth not so much of summer, as of families coming together. Cousins and cousins, aunts and uncles and children and the elderly, till nobody knew who was whose-but just revelled in the "oneness". And with so many in the 'oneness' it was inevitable that thoughts would turn to "You know what happened to..." or "Have you heard of..." till a strange story followed a spine-chiller...and vet, safe in numbers and secure in the warmth of family, each member, old or young-the young especially --begged for more...

Strange, unexplained, bizarre or ghostly—the stories never hurt or harmed but helped nurture a healthy respect for events beyond our ken. A respect

day in the year. He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day who allows it to be invaded with worry and anxiety. Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities, crept in. Forget them as soon as you can: Tomorrow is a new day, begin it well and serenely. This new day is too dear with its hopes and invitations.

Niranjan Khilnani, New Delhi

and an acknowledgment that Man or his overtaught offspring was not ultimately, the all-knowing. That there are, perhaps, spirits, gentle, well-meaning ones, who possibly do and would guide us still. But who—if our understanding or perception of them be distorted—appear harmful or malevolent.

But hush...April is upon us and exams are behind... It is time to relax and enjoy the redolent summer nights. And what better way than with Children's World's 28th birthday offering. A bonanza of STRANGE STORIES by some of your favourite writers...

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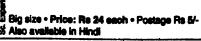


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Hand the boy was worried. He was always worried when his mother was ill. She was all he had. His father had died when he was four.

Life had been a struggle since. It was difficult to manage on the dwindling sum of money which his father had left—money which could not be supplemented, as his mother was an invalid and unable to work.

She had suffered from rheumatism for a number of years. After the boy's birth, the disease had taken a hold over her, tying her down to a wheelchair. There was a woman who came in daily to help her with washing and dressing. Other than this, she would manage with the help of the boy to a large extent.

The boy loved his mother. He was her constant companion, proud of her, always boasting about her to his friends, telling them what a wonderful person she was, always smiling, in spite of her condition.

And at forty-two his mother was still quite girlishly beautiful large, expressive, brown eves, petal smooth and



Story: Vernon Thomas Illustrations: Viky Arya

unwrinkled skin, hair greying softly, framing pleasant features. Her face gave no indication of suffering. It was only below the neckline that the signs of rheumatism were in evidence—crooked fingers, bent knees. And the pain, always there in her joints, restricting her movements.

Constant pain, though, had made her immune to the intensity of physical pain. Her main suffering was mental. It lay in seeing her boy grow up without proper care.

Often she would think of his future, of her inability to do all the things she would have liked to do for him.

The boy, too, had his regrets. His most cherished wish was to escort his mother to a dance. If there was one thing the boy could do, he could dance—a talent which came to him from his mother, a good dancer in her day.

His mother's only sister, a good dancer, too had noticed the boy's ability quite early and

CHILDREN'S WORLD APRIL 1995

given him lessons. With the result, at eleven, the boy was quite a capable ballroom dancer.

And dancing was a topic for conversation. The boy loved to listen to his mother's stories about the days when she was young and able to dance. His mother had met his father that way—at a dance. They had shared ten short years of happy marriage. The boy had been born after six such years.

His mother's stories always made the boy feel sad. Sad, like he felt at this moment, watching his mother anxiously...

She lay in bed, all covered up. She had suffered a mild heart condition. The doctor had said, of course, that he must not worry. His mother would be well in a matter of days. Yet, the boy did worry.

He stroked his mother's forehead and she smiled up at him wearily.

"Just a little setback, darling! I'll be better tomorrow," she whispered.

"I hope so, Mum!" he answered.

"Of course, I will be better," she assured him, "Go to bed. It's late. If I need you, I'll call." He hesitated for a second. "Goodnight, Mum!"

Gently he kissed her cheek and left. In his small room across the corridor he undressed and got into bed. Though, try as he would, sleep would not come. In the darkness he stared at the ceiling, deep in thought.

Then he heard her call his name. He listened, and his name was repeated. He opened his eyes and sat up with a start.

The ceiling light was on. But what was most unbelievable, his mother was standing at his bedside. The boy stared at her for a bit, feeling he must be dreaming.

She spoke, and he knew it was real.

"Aren't you going to get up, Son?"

"Mum!"He was off the bed at once. "Mum, I can't believe it. You're walking!

"Yes, I'm walking!"
She giggled and turned a small pirouette on the carpet. "See! It's a miracle."

He was incredulous. "How did it happen?"

"God knows!" she shrugged. "I got up of a sudden with the urge to walk. So I got off the bed, and here I am."

Still not quite believing his eyes, the boy circled his mother slowly. True! She was standing straight, and even her fingers were long and tapering.

His mother watched him fondly all the while. Finally, she gave him a tap on the shoulder.

"Come, let's go into the living room. We'll chat."

The boy followed his mother out in a daze, watching her walk, fascinated. He had never seen her walk before. Her movements were so graceful. The ends of her nightie, flapping about her ankles, she reminded him of a princess at a ball.

A ball! The boy's thoughts turned at once to dancing, and to the flowing dresses hanging in his mother's wardrobe.

His mother had hardly sat down on the sofa when he was tugging her to her feet again.

"Mum, let's have a party!" he suggested excitedly. "Just the two of us."

"A party! But we'll disturb the neighbours."

"Two people can't make all that much noise."

Already his brain was doing overtime. He had

visions of them dancing the fulfillment of his cherished dream.

"We'll dress up, Mum," he carried on. "Have a real ball."

Her eyes glistened as the idea caught on. "Yes, let's! Good idea! What will I wear?" "Come on! I'll help you choose."

He skipped off to her bedroom. She followed. And he was all excitement as she flung open the panels of the wardrobe. Together they peered into its interior, examining the row of hanging dresses, most of them dating back to her youth. She had kept the lot, each a reminder of some past event—the subjects of the stories he loved to hear.

His hands had now alighted on a frothy lace dress in ice blue. He



handled it eagerly.

"Mum, this one. Your engagement dress."

"Ah, yes!" she sighed.
"It mightn't fit."

"Never mind! Try!"

She removed the dress from its hanger and flung it on the bed without further argument. They selected a pair of stockings next, and silver shoes. The stockings had brown stains on them and the silver on the shoe had tarnished. She pointed this out.

He waved her away.
"No harm, Mum! It's all part of the fun."

He was rummaging again now, and this time produced a fan of dyed pink ostrich feathers. He handed it to her.

"The last of your fancy dress, Mum!" he said grandly.

"My mementos of the past," she corrected him. "I wore all these for my engagement. Your father couldn't take his eyes off me that night." She was lost in thought for a bit, then snapping back she said, "Young man! Now I must dress." She pushed him gently towards the door.

"Oh, by the way, what will you wear?" she remembered to ask.

He shrugged. "Not

much choice. My blue shirt and navytrousers, I guess. They're the best I have."

"Yes, they are. I've been meaning to buy you new clothes. But money is always so short."

Now the boy snapped his fingers as a thought struck him.

"Forget the money, Mum! There's something you've forgotten. A most important item. Remember!"

His mother threw him a puzzled look and he explained, "The rose! You forgot the rose."

She clapped a hand over her mouth. "Oh, yes, the rose!" she exclaimed. "How could I forget! But...." and she threw a puzzled glance at a pile of trunks stacked in a corner. "It will be a problem to get it out. It's in that trunk at the bottom."

"Never mind, I'll help."
He was all eagerness.
"You've always promised to show me that rose,
Mum! Never got around to doing so, somehow.
And yet it's been such an important item in your life."

"Yes, a most important item. Your father gave me that rose about a week after we met. I never

went to a dance without it. It was my lucky rose. It helped me win so many prizes for dancing."

"Then let's take it out, Mum! Please!"

She agreed after some hesitation.

Together they lifted down the trunks. They found the rose carefully wrapped in tissue paper. It was an artificial rose made of scarlet velvet, very beautiful, and in perfect condition.

She handled it tenderly as her eyes filled.

"Better get dressed, Mum!" he reminded her.

He was ready before her, waiting in the living room. As she came to join him, the boy could hardly recognise his mother. She looked so girlish, so pretty. The blue lace dress was a perfect fit. The red velvet rose, pinned at her waist, and the ostrich feather fan contributed to a look of elegance.

He was suddenly shy.
She seemed like a
stranger. Though, when
he glanced at her face and
observed the familiar
features, he was
reassured, rushing across
to hug her at once.

"Dear me!" she smiled,

flapping her fan in mock disdain. "A fine way to treat a lady! You're supposed to escort me to the hall."

Immediately he gave her his arm and led her to the sofa. Though, once seated, he was again at a loss, not knowing what to do.

"Come on, Prince Charming!" she reminded him. "You're supposed to ask me to dance."

"Dance! Oh, yes!"

He was spurred to activity now, jumping up and racing over to the radiogram. Fumbling through a pile of old records, he selected one and placed it on the platter. It was a Victor Sylvester number, and it helped to break the ice. Because, as the strains of the waltz filled the room, the boy came up boldly to his mother and bowed. "May I have the pleasure, Madam?" He spoke in his best accent.

She fluttered her fan, simpered a bit, then got to her feet and curtsied. "But, of course, Sir!"

Their movements at first were a bit awkward, but as their feet blended, it was evident that they were well matched, as though they had been

dancing together for years. And as they danced, oblivious to all else, ashtrays flew off tables, ornaments crashed to the ground, as her skirts swept them away.

When the music concluded, he led her back to her seat, bowed, and retired to the radiogram, his face flushed with delight.

Now the boy chose a foxtrot, and the formalities

were repeated.

They carried on for six consecutive numbers. It was fun, more so because sometimes she agreed to dance readily.

Sometimes, she pretended to be engaged with another partner, choosing her son, of course, in the end, when she decided that the other partner was not

And all this while the boy experienced a sense of

going to turn up.





satisfaction beyond his wildest dreams. He could have danced all night. Only, his mother needed a break.

"I could do with a drink, Sir!" she reminded him.

"May I escort you to the table, Madam?" he responded.

He gave her his arm again, and together, like visiting royalty, they moved to the tiny alcove which served as dining space.

Except that now the alcove became a posh restaurant. The orange squash they drank was champagne. The coarse glassware was priceless crystal. It was a game of make-believe played to perfection.

More dancing followed once they had finished, and it was only when the wall clock struck three that they were reminded of the time.

"Goodness it's late, Son!" she cried. "Time we went to bed."

His face grew anxious at once. "Mum, you must be tired. How thoughtless of me!"

"No, I'm fine."

"Sure?"

"Sure!"

He was reassured. "Then can we do this again? Next time for real? Now that you can walk, it will be such fun."

For answer she kissed him gently and he hugged her.

"Go to bed, Son!" she said.

"Mum, I will always remember tonight."

"So will I."

She unpinned the rose from her waist and handed it to him.

"I want you to keep this. In remembrance of tonight."

"Of course... Now go to bed!"

She smiled briefly and went to her room.

The boy gazed at the rose in his hand for a long moment, then walked over to place it reverently on the writing desk in a corner. Tomorrow he would put it away among his small treasures.

Tomorrow—and he gazed at the aftermath of their celebration—he would tidy up. Because tonight, he was much too tired, and much too happy.

The sun was already streaming through the window when he awoke. He sat up with a start and the previous night's events flooded back.

It had been a dream—a

wonderful, vivid dream!

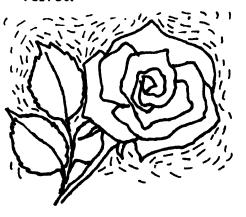
The boy now thought of his mother lying ill in the next room. She must be needing a hot drink. Already it was late.

He hurried across to her. Yet, even before he reached her door, he sensed that something was wrong. And he didn't have to touch her either to be certain. She was cold, a small smile playing about her lips.

He turned away stunned, incapable of emotion, and mechanically walked into the living room. He glanced around. Not a thing was out of place. Even the dining table was clear of glasses, a further confirmation that it had been a dream.

The boy's heart was empty, as he wandered back through the living room, across to the writing desk. And then as his gaze fell on it, he froze, and stared.

On the writing desk lay a rose made of scarlet velvet.



The Yellow Bird: Plume

Story: Dipavali Debroy

S part of his homework, Bubul was trying to learn R. L. Stevenson's *The Vagabond* by heart.

"Give to me the life I love,

Let the lave go by me. Give the jolly heaven

above

And the byway nigh me."

"Not my line at all," / Bubul uttered under his breath.

Dadu was stroking one of his calloused and hardened feet. He looked up and peered at Bubul. —"Why, don't you want to see the wide world?" he asked.

"Our Bubul is a regular little homebody," remarked Ma, busy serving Dadu some tea. "He loves to stay at home and loll around. The games he plays are all indoor games—Ludo and Carom. I wish he would go out more often."

Illustrations: Chitra Raju

"Why, he doesn't even want to go on treks and camps that his school organises!" commented "That's not like a grandson of mine at all!" exclaimed Dadu. And indeed, it was not. Dadu



CHILDREN'S WORLD APRIL 1995

was a widely-travelled man. In fact, as early as fourteen, he had run away from this small town which had been his ancestral home. He had joined a circus party and then a magic show, and had kept his people wondering about where he was. Not a letter had he written. Somehow Dadu had turnèd up in Mongolia, and his travelogues had been published in some British newspapers. These had brought him fame and further opportunities of travelling across the globe. He had married, but had never really settled down. His wife died early. Dadu had come back to his hometown, and had dumped Baba—still a baby—with his old mother and had gone off again.

Perhaps this is what Dadu had felt then, thought Bubul:

'Bed in the bush with
stars to see,
Bread I dip in the
river—
There's the life for a
man like me,
There's the life for ever.'
But it had not gone on
like that for ever.

One fine morning *Dadu* had come back, saying that he had become tired of travelling, and wanted to spend the rest of his

days here, at 'home'.

It was true. The doctors here had examined him and had advised a quiet. homebound life for him. Dadu himself had been quite content to do as the doctors had advised. He spent most of his time in bed or playing cards, sipping tea, and bathing his tired feet in hot water. Except for the occasional walk he would take in the open stretch, a little distance from their house.

The expanse had somehow survived the mad rush of people building houses and flats all over the once sleepy little town.

"He's too old to go there all by himself," Ma told Bubul. "You have to go with him and be by his side—whether you like it or not."

And that is what Bubul had to do, whenever *Dadu* felt like taking a walk. As he now did.

"Stop mugging up those lines," called out *Dadu*.
"Instead, come out with me and watch the glorious sunset."

They passed through the narrow streets into the wide stretch of land that lay to one side of the town.

"Shall I tell you a little secret?" asked *Dadu* as he walked across the stretch

of red earth. "To start with, I was just like you. Didn't much like to stir out of my house.

Gharkuno (someone attached to the corner of the house), my mother used to call me. But it all changed one day."

"How did it change? What happened? Please tell me," said Bubul, tripping over the stones that lay scattered along the field.

"Suddenly, it happened one day. It was here—in fact, on an evening that was just like this."

Bubul looked around. The sky was red, the field was empty and bare. The sun was a haze of dust. A breeze was rising.

"Yes, *Dadu*, what happened?" he asked.

"By chance, I was out that evening on an errand to the next village. Suddenly, I heard a loud whir of wings—I looked up and saw a strange bird above me. It was golden yellow and fluttered its wings wildly. It called, but no sound came out. It swooped down on meand as it came closer. I saw that it had no legs. What a curious bird. I thought. I couldn't take my eyes off it—I kept on staring at it. All of a sudden, it swooped down-very low-and I



received a tremendous whack. The bird's wings had flapped against my chest. Here, just over here—I think, it was," said *Dadu* pointing at a stony patch.

"What did you do then, Dadu? Did you try to catch the bird?"

"No, it hit me so hard that I fell down on the round. By the time I picked myself up, it was a speck in the sky. But it

changed everything for me. I suddenly felt a stirring within me, a restlessness, a thirst for things unknown. I felt I just could not stay on here any more, that I had to get out of the life I had been leading. And I ran away the very next day."

"What about the yellow bird?" asked Bubul.

"I have never seen it again. But I have often

thought about it. Could there possibly have been a connection between that bird and my sudden wanderlust? What bird was it that had made such a difference to me?"

"Dadu," said Bubul round-eyed, as an idea struck him. "That must be the yellow bird Lila Majumdar has written about in her book Halde Pakhir Palak (The Yellow Bird's Plume)."

As *Dadu* looked blank, Bubul began to explain.

"You see, this book says that there are some yellow birds who cannot call out because they have no voice, cannot sit because they have no legs. They keep on flying and flying and flutter their wings. If they flap against anyone's chest, they create a hollow within the chest. Nothing in the world can ever fill up that emptiness, although that person goes to the farthest end of the earth trying to fill it up. He keeps on moving from place to place and becomes a vagabond."

"I never knew that there was such a book!" exclaimed *Dadu*. "Tell me more about it."

"There was a fellow named Jhagru in the book. It was he who kept on telling people that

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there was such a bird."

Then Bubul stopped and said, "But it is just a story, I'm sure—just something Lila Majumdar made up in her head. It can't be true, Dadu, no-"

Dadu shook his head. "But Bubul, it is true that such a bird struck me, and the very next day I ran away."

"Are you happy or sad that you did, Dadu?" Bubul asked.

"Neither, now," replied Dadu. "Only very tired. The rest of my days, I just want to stay put—here among all of you-in the place I know so well. T've had enough of the world."

He smiled a wry smile "Whatever the effect of the yellow bird's plumes. in my case, it must have worn off by now."

It was just then that Bubul heard the whir of wings. He looked up. There was a speck in the sky above, that was fast growing bigger and bigger. In that fading light, Bubul's eyes caught the gleam of yellow and in a matter of moments, out of nowhere, there materialised a bird that was yellow in colour. hovering right over their heads and flapping its wings madly.

And Dadu, though in "Dadu, look! It's your his seventies, broke into a yellow bird again!" run.

shouted Bubul.

An awful spluttering came from Dadu's lips. "Yes, it's the same bird. Oh, my God, it's come back again."

"Why are you running like that, Dadu—you'll fall—you'll break your bones," shouted Bubul and began to run after his grandfather.

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The bird above them also began to fly after Dadu. Yes, it was swooping down upon them.

"Stop, Dadu—"

"I can't," Dadu answered in a choking and gasping voice. "It's after me. It'll flap at me again—and again I'll be out on the roads—a vagabond—a wavfarer. But I don't want it anymore—I am an old man nowwant to rest..."

Bubul saw that the bird was now close to the terrified figure of Dadu, stumbling, falling, getting up and running on again. It seemed bent on dashing its wings against Dadu.

"Save me," cowered Dadu. "I can't go through it all over again. I am old. Have mercy on me."

Yet the yellow bird pursued him. Relentless.

Bubul ran—with all the strength that he could muster. It was a race between him and the yellow bird—and he won. Right at the moment when the yellow bird was about to come down upon Dadu, Bubul caught up with it and flung himself upon his grandfather.

Dadu reeled under the impact. Bubul fell right on top of him—his legs in the air, but covering Dadu's body with his own.

And it was just at that very second that the vellow bird descended upon him. One powerful brush of the wings against his chest and the bird was gone again, zooming upwards in a golden rush. In a matter of seconds, it was a speck in the distant skv.

Bubul helped *Dadu* on to his feet. Dadu had scratched himself in the bushes as he ran—and had received bumps on his forehead as he fell. Bubul had to hold his hand and lead his painful, tottering steps back home.

It took some time to pass through the now



darkened town. By the time they reached home, it was night.

"My God, what have you done to yourselves?" shrilled Ma as she opened the door.

"Dadu had a fall," explained Bubul.

Ma washed Dadu's injuries with antiseptic lotion and made him comfortable. Then she turned to Bubul and said, "Now yoù see why I insisted on your going along with him."

Bubul did not answer directly. Instead, he suddenly began to recite the poem he had been struggling with earlier that afternoon. Give the face of earth around And the road before me"

At the dinner table too, he kept on reciting from *The Vagabond*:

"Wealth I seek not, hope nor love, Nor a friend to know me. All I seek, is the heaven

And the road below me."
"Why on earth are you going on like that?" asked

above

"I don't really know, Baba," replied Bubul. "It just keeps coming to my lips."

Baba.

"You, too, are tired," said Ma. "After all, you have had a tough time with *Dadu* today. Go and lie down. Rest."

"Rest?" Bubul grinned to himself as he went up to his bedroom. His head awhirl with plans of going all around the world—seeing new places and new people, getting new things—none of which would fill the hollow that had just been created inside his chest.

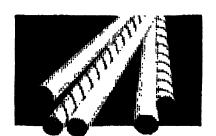
'I'm simply dying to see the world,' he said to himself, as he put together a few clothes...



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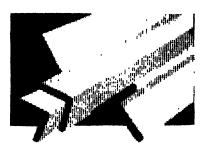
Plates

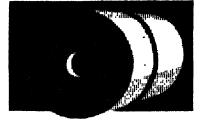
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HATEVER is the use of studying this language? Are we ever going to speak it or use it in life?" Geeta raged at no one in particular. She was trying to prepare for her Sanskrit test the next day.

Unfortunately for her, her grandfather heard her.

"It is a shame that the youth of today does not understand the value of Indian culture and her tradition. Sanskrit is the language of the Gods!"

"But I am not God!" muttered Geeta under a breath.

Story: Thangamar Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterje

Indeed she was but poor mortal who was trying desperately to prevent her overall percentage from going down because of poor marks a Sanskrit. An otherwise bright student, who easn remembered the formulae in Physics and Chemistry, she could not for the life of her score more than 60 per cent in Sanskrit. A that too after sitting through the night

"Thatha, why don't y teach me? You must h

learning by rote.



studied Sanskrit when you were young, didn't you?"

"I...uh...I would love to, Geeta, but you see, I do not have the knack of teaching...If my father had been alive, he would have taught you. He was the finest Sanskrit teacher that ever lived..."

Geeta could never understand her grandfather's reluctance to teach her the subject he was so prompt to defend. 'Maybe he really is a poor teacher; she thought. She wished that her great grandfather were there to teach her. Her parents had arranged for tuitions, but nothing seemed to help her. She had some kind of mental block where Sanskrit was concerned.

Just when she was ready to start on her essay, the power went o

"Oh, no! I will never finish the syllabus nov she said aloud. She dimind studying by can light, but the mosquit wouldn't have let her study, without the fan. had better go to the terrace. There will be some light to study by," she decided.

There was a small roo upstairs which was used for dumping all the junk accumulated over the

Geeta sat down in the years. There were several large steel and wooden old chair. It was very trunks, broken furniture comfortable despite the and unused brass and broken arm. She opened her copy. The test was the copper utensils. Geeta had least of her concerns. The forgotten to bring a chair Board exams were, and along and now looked in they were just a month the junk for something to sit on. Her eyes fell upon away. She had better do something pretty soon or an armchair in one corner. else her Board exam One of the arms was results were sure to broken, but the cane was still intact. She dragged it



She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Then she heard the sound of chanting. A lot of voices reciting... She opened her eyes and found herself in an open courtyard. A large, dark man was sitting on an armchair, and on the ground before him sat about a dozen students—all boys. The

place looked very ancient, as if it belonged to another time and age.

"Rama Ramau
Ramaha..." chanted the
boys after the teacher. He
had long hair which was
knotted at the back and
he had sacred ash
smeared all over his body.
There was a cane on his
lap. The boys were all
wearing dhotis and the
sacred thread; they had a

their teacher.

Geeta realised that she should not be in that place which was clearly meant for the boys. She pressed herself into the shadows in the far corner and hoped no one would catch her. She found herself repeating after the teacher too. Somehow, the vibhaktis were not as difficult or dull, when he made the students recite them aloud. Geeta began enjoying it all.

"Raghava! Are you sleeping?" the teacher's voice boomed.

A skinny boy with a long nose, sitting in the second row, started up at being addressed. He began reciting aloud too.

After a while the teacher called upon the older boys. "Today we will learn to write an essay," he said.

Essay! Geeta was most excited. They had to write one on their favourite festival.

"Sir, can we do one on Diwali?" she asked, before biting on her tongue. She was not supposed to be sitting there at all! What if someone had heard her? Fortunately no one turned round.

"We will do an essay on Deepavali," said the teacher, looking straight





at the corner where Geeta was sitting. Had he seen her after all? Geeta's throat went dry with fear. But he continued with the lesson as if nothing had happened.

It was such great fun. He made the boys come out with the points and asked them to form sentences on their own. Each one had his turn. To her form a few sentences of her own too and found them right, for a change. Oh, this was fun! She almost began liking Sanskrit!

"Geeta! Geetu...!" her mother was calling her.

Geeta woke up with a start. The power had come on. 'Oh God!' she had gone and slept when she couldn't afford to waste a

Miss Verma is going to chew me up tomorrow,' she thought miserably. She vaguely remembered the dream and wondered if she could reproduce the essay that the old teacher in the dream had taught the boys. She dragged the chair back into the room before going down.



return the papers to you during the last period, since today is the last working day," announced Miss Verma the next day.

Geeta groaned. She had hoped they would not get back the papers. Now she had had it!

Strangely, once she began writing, the answers came to her of their own accord. It was as if the old teacher of her dream was speaking and all she had to do was write what he was saying.

No one was more surprised by her marks when the papers were returned in the evening, than Miss Verma. Geeta had scored 90 per cent!

"Geeta, your essay is amazing. It is so original! Where did you learn it?"

Before she could think straight, she blurted out, "From my grandfather!" Now why had she gone and said that?

"Good! Keep it up and you can do well in your Boards too," replied Miss Verma.

All the way home,
Geeta could not but
wonder about her dream.
And suddenly, she remembered. The chair she had
been sitting upon was so
similar to the one the
teacher in her dream had
sat upon! Maybe it had

something to do with her new-found knowledge! She decided to go up and sit on it again. She couldn't wait to get home.

This time, as soon as Geeta sat on the armchair, she felt sort of heavy and drowsy and soon found herself transported to the ancient gurukul. That day again they recited the vibhaktis and then the teacher began asking questions of the boys. Geeta answered some herself.

"Raghava! Can't you get one answer correct? Where is your brain?" the teacher pulled up the skinny boy and lifted the cane.

"Oh, no! He is going to beat him," Geeta cringed in her corner. But the teacher lowered the cane and made Raghavan stand up and repeat the answer ten times! Raghavan, for his part, did not seem to be afraid of his teacher at all!

"What are you doing in the dark?" someone was shaking her. Geeta woke up with a start. Her grandfather was standing above her, his hands on his hips.

"Uh..oh!" said Geeta in confusion.

Then her grandfather was speaking. "This was

the same chair my father used to sit upon when he took his Sanskrit class. How I tormented him! He kept shouting, 'Raghava, don't dream!' or 'Raghava, stand up!' All I could think of was farming, the plants and the earth. I never learnt Sanskrit properly. Instead I went to college and studied agriculture. Now I wish I had listened to him. At least I could have made him happy and, perhaps, even taught you today!" Grandfather was speaking as if to himself, his hands caressing the old wood of the armchair, as though he was remembering the old days.

"...had my father been there to teach you, you could have mastered the subject. He was a great teacher!" her grandfather was saying.

"But he did teach me, Thatha," said Geeta under her breath.

There was no other way she could have taken that day's test and written that essay all by herself. But would anyone believe her, if she spoke about it? She decided not to. She patted the armchair conspiratorially before getting up to follow her grandfather downstairs.



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Story: Paro Anand

Illustrations: Sudakshina Ghosh

T was a dark and stormy night and the wind howled around the deserted house... Ha! but every ghost story starts like that.

This one is different and special. Because it wasn't a dark and stormy night, but a hot, bright, sunny day and the only wind was a baby-soft breeze that murmured and made the trees sigh with pleasure. And it wasn't an old, deserted house, but one which had a regular family living in it. One father, one mother, one brother, one sister, two dogs and one cat. And the daughter just happened to be me!

So this isn't really a ghost story, for 'story' implies that it is based on fiction, not fact. But this, my friends, is a ghost experience based on

nothing but hard cold fact. So, if you have nerves of steel, steal away with me to the forbidden world of the half-dead who lurk just a breath away—only we can make contact with them. As I could. And I did...

It was a beautiful, old house into which we shifted. One of those grand relics of the British Raj. Three bedrooms and a study upstairs. A sweeping staircase with a landing of exquisite marble, led down to a huge living-dining room which opened out onto a large, fragrant garden. Much of the furniture had been left behind by the owners as they had shifted into a small flat. This was lovely, because one piece was a gorgeous old bureau-type desk in my room. You know, one of

those with a flapdown desk top and little drawers to hold pins, pens, stamps, staples, etc. My room was the perfect little den that makes up the dreams of any twelve-year-old.

The first time it happened, it was so out of the blue that I did not react. You see, I was coming up the stairs. I'd just passed the landing when I heard a sound. Not words, more like the soothing cooing of doves. But it was a question. That I could make out by the lifting lilt at the end. And a woman's voice. A soft, dove-like, feminine voice.

"Huh?" I said, already three steps above the landing. I turned round to find myself facing a completely empty staircase. Yet, I could fix the exact spot on the landing from



where I'd heard the whispery voice. I laughed, out loud, "HA HA" for, of course, I didn't believe in spooks. Didn't in the past tense. Until...until I was coming down later, thinking of nothing but food, for I was hungry. I didn't hear her this time. But I did feel her. Feel her presence there on the landing. Feel her eyes on me. It wasn't a cold. creepy or ghostly presence. Just...just there. I hesitated for a moment and then I ran. Not knowing who, or what I was running from. At dinner I was lost in worried thought until Ma asked, "What's the matter, Paro? Something bothering you?"

I should have said it then. Told them about the whispering lady of the landing. But instead, "No. No, nothing." What could I say? They would never believe me.

After dinner, I hung around, waiting for someone to go up with me. I didn't want to ask anyone, I'd feel too silly. Most often we all watched T.V. together downstairs after dinner, but luckily, my father said he'd work in the study instead. So both of us climbed up together. I felt like holding his hand, but instead, I just

babbled some silly stuff that came into my head. As we were just three steps away from THE place, my mother called him to watch someone they knew, appearing on T.V. just then. Just as if it were destined that I should be left stranded there. And then I heard a little giggle. Little-girl like. My heart in my mouth, I fled up the stairs and slammed the door of my room, leaning against it in case SHE was going to try and get in after me. But nothing happened, no moans, no chains, no footsteps. I bolted my door anyway and sighed. 'Be reasonable. It's nothing. You heard some squeak of something and you're letting your imagination get the better of you.', But I did not convince myself completely.

It went on like that for weeks. Each time I thought I'd confide in someone, I stopped at the last minute, quite convinced that I'd be making a fool of myself. But the Thing was eating into me, and had robbed me of my appetite and sleep. Of course, it also affected my studies, for who can concentrate with a spook in the house?

I had a History test one day and I knew I was

nowhere near ready. I'd tried very hard, but even basic facts were elusive. Deep in thought, I descended the stairs, lugging my heavy bag. Then, for the first time SHE/IT touched me. Just a gentle stroking of the head. Affectionate, soft as a mother's touch.

And the whispery voice asked, "Paro, are you all right?"

A mother's soft voice of love and concern.

So normal, infact, that I answered, "Yes, of course I'm all right," before I could turn round, after which I realised, with a shock, that there was nobody there. Then suddenly, I was shivering so violently that I sank down onto the steps. For I had realised that whatever this Thing was, it knew my name. She had spoken to me by name!!

"Who—who are you?" No reply.

"What do you want from me?"

No reply.

"How do you know my name?"

Silence.

"Answer me, please. Tell me what I can do. Or leave me alone."

Nothing. Silence. No reply.

"Talking to yourself again?" asked a mocking

voice. I leapt right up, only to be reassured at the sight of my grinning brother.

"I...I..." was as far as I got by way of explanation before I passed out.

"Hey Ma..." I heard my brother's panicky voice call out before I was enveloped by the soft, satiny, blank blackness.

I awoke a while later, I guess, to a sea of worried faces.

"Paro, are you all right?" they asked. Again! Not again!

The same question. I heard a screaming. Like a yelping of a whipped dog and saw the faces above me merge and separate in a wave of worry.

I felt a mother's comforting arm wrap itself round me as I struggled, screaming, "Let me go. I don't know who you are."

"Shh-shh," she calmed me, and I heard the screaming subside. Felt the tears of release and relief course down my cheeks and wet the sari that I knew now to be my own mother's. It turned out that I had malaria with high fever.

"This often gives rise to hallucinations and wild imaginings," I heard the doctor tell my worried parents who had, by now, got the story of the Lady of the Landing out from me. They were relieved by the doctor's words, and I suppose I should have been relieved too. But somehow I knew that my problems were not going to be solved by mere chloroquin tablets, bitter as they were.

I recovered gradually, both in health and peace of mind. And she was quiet too. Not saying, doing, touching. Although I often felt that she watched my comings and goings. But silently. Nothing dramatic.

Then..then, one night, I sat on my chair to play my guitar. I pulled it up to the foot of my bed so I could prop my feet up while I played. After a bit, I went to bed, leaving my chair where it was. I think I was in that state of halfsleep which must be akin to the state of half-life—or half-death—when I felt someone come in. A presence. Cool. Calm. Almost like soothing music. I felt as though someone had sat down on my bed. Just the slight pulling of the sheet. The depression in

the mattress.

I opened my eyes. And for the first time, I saw her. She wasn't sitting on my bed. But on the chair which I'd left at the foot of my bed. She sat there, so serene. Her long, pale hands folded primly on her lap, like two sleeping doves. She was wearing a long-sleeved, high-necked, white nightie almost Victorian in its ribboned primness. And her face. Pale, wan. But smiling. With her head gently tilted to one side. She looked straight into my



eyes and smiled a smile of wistful gentleness.

And then the hair. Standing out against the paleness of the rest of her. Flame-red, wildly permed and flowing down, a glorious fiery crown, cascading down, past her waist. I know that I looked into her eves. although I can't remember what colour they were. I felt myself being calmed, soothed, like when you're given an injection to make you go to sleep. Strange though it seems now, I know that I wasn't frightened. In fact, I felt that I had to make a very important decision. As I looked into the deep pools of her eyes, I knew that I could either allow myself to drown in them, or, I could break away from her. But now. Now and forever. Or never.

The easy thing, it seemed, was to let myself go to her, into her. It required no effort. And she looked so still and calm and gentle.

I heard something struggle inside me, "No! No!" it screamed out. But I wasn't sure that I wanted to leave her now. It seemed so lovely to go with her, wherever she wanted to take me. But the struggling inside grew louder, more insistent.

"Get out. No! Get away from her."

I felt the panic rise up within me and, with a superhuman effort, I broke eye-contact with her. A wind kicked up outside, tossing branches and making trees groan. I looked at her in frightened confusion and saw her smile and nod calmly. Telling me she knew my decision and understood it. I couldn't bear it anymore. I pulled the sheet over my head and prayed like I've never prayed before. I don't know whether she sat there, or disappeared, or vanished, or whatever it is that ghosts are supposed to do. I know that somewhere in the night, my prayers were answered, for when I awoke it was to a cold, grey dawn. She was gone.

In the cold, sharp shower, I laughed at the vividness of my dream. For, it was only a dream. wasn't it? What else could it possibly have been? The excitement of the school day, with sports day just round the corner drove the red-haired lady fairly out of my mind and shook off the whole, spooky business. Later, at home, as I went upstairs to sit down to my homework, I noticed it. For the first time in months I passed the

landing and there was nothing there. No watching, no touching, no speaking.

I almost felt like laughing out loud, as I floated on upstairs, and pulled the chair back to my desk and plonked myself down. Bravely I dismissed the thought that there had been someone entirely different, seated on it last night. I tidied up the desk a bit before settling down. And... Then... I... Saw... It.

It.

The final proof.

Ĭŧ.

The final proof that she did after all.

Exist.

For there, across the desk lay a long, red hair. Crinkly, as though wildly permed. A hair. So long, red and crinkly that it couldn't possibly belong to anybody in my straight, black-haired family. I held it up and watched it dance in the sudden wind that kicked up and tossed the moaning trees....

Swallowing big gulps of air, I tried to steady myself. Somehow I made it to my mother's room, holding aloft the terrible proof. My story spilled out. As I reached the end of the story, Llaid the hair on my mother's palm with fingers that were as cold as death. As even now,





the hands being forced to write this eerie story are death-cold with the feeling of the hair they held over twenty years ago.

Well, Ma felt that the best thing to do was to burn the hair. Actually, she must have been pretty shaken by it all, although, for my sake she acted cool. As though ghosts leaving their hair behind was quite an everyday event. So, we took the hair outside and put a match to it. Zoop! and it was gone. I never realised how quickly hair burns.

"She won't bother you anymore."

"How do you know?"

"Because we've put an end to Her."

So sure, so cool. That's my mum.

"You're sure?"

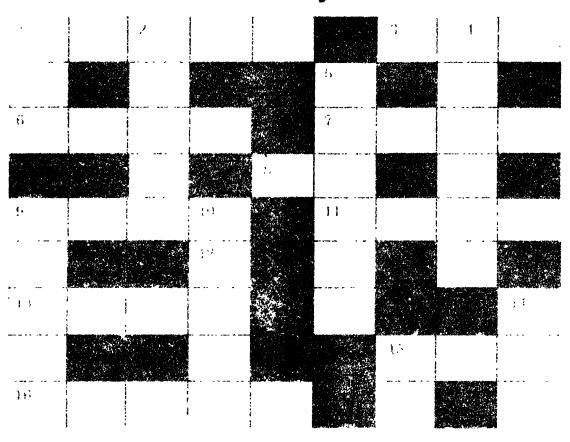
"Positive."

With such finality in her voice that I really did believe her and perhaps, so did the ghost, for I never, ever felt, heard or saw her again.

Not like that, anyway. But even now, even now, as I recall the story for you, I see that smile, that pale face against the glorious sunny-halo of hair. So clearly, that I have to wonder if it is mere memory, or if she is still there for me to see.

CROSSQUIZ

Kamala Rajan



Across

- 1. Roberto Baggio's country (5)
- 3. Address of respect for a master (3)
 - 6. Volcano in Italy (4)
- 7. The.... is to the steady—not to the strong (4)
- 8. Egyptian God of the Sun (2)
- l. 9. Beams of the sun (4)

- 11. A prophet; a
- soothsayer(4)
 - 13. Nair; Director of
- 'Salaam Bombay' (4)
 - 15. Peas are found in
- this case (3)
- 16. Slang for a dotty or crazy person (5)

Down

- 1. Frozen water (3)
- 2. Irritate (5)

- 4. Twelve of these make
- a foot (6)
 - 5. Other name for a
- rubber (6)
 - 9. Julius Caesar's
- nationality(5)
 - 10. Begin, commence (5)
 - 14. The plus sign
- means you.... (3)
 - 15. Short for post
- office (2)



CHILDREN'S WORLD APRIL 1995



Story: Shailaja Nair Illustrations: Viky Arya

ELL, the first time I felt his presence was two months ago."

Rahul stopped in his tracks. What could Ammooma (grandmother) be talking about? And who was she talking to? He stood at the door to his grandmother's room but did not enter.

"You mean soon after Achchan (father) died?"
Rahul heard his mother ask. "That must have been your imagination, Amma (mother). After all, you were so upset at his death."

"No, no. At first even I thought so. But every time I am alone I can

feel someone near me. And once I even saw him enter the granary. But when I went in, I found no one. Another time I found that all the bananas which I had temporarily stored in the granary had been thrown here and there. That is when I wrote to you asking you to come here for the summer holidays. I am becoming quite nervous living here," Ammooma's voice stopped on a sob.

"Don't worry, Amma.
You won't have to live here alone any more," said Daddy in a soothing voice.

"Then what will I do? I don't want to leave

this house. It has been in my family for 300 years," said *Ammooma*.

"I know that. We'll think of something. Maybe Asha and the children could stay here and I could come whenever possible," said Daddy.

Rahul was dismayed. What? Live without Daddy? It had never happened in his tenyear-old life. He could not believe his ears.

"I wish you could start your furniture business here, instead of in Delhi," said Ammooma. "If only I knew where your grandfather hid all his gold coins. We could have used them just

now."

"Well, we'll think of something. You need not worry anyway. Now go to sleep, *Amma*. It is past 11 o'clock," said Mummy.

Hearing this Rahul quickly tiptoed back to his room. His mind was in turmoil. This holiday was becoming too adventurous for his liking. It had begun with Ammooma's letter asking them to come to Kerala for the summer vacations. His twin sisters. Anita and Vinita, had been most angry. They had been looking forward to going to Dalhousie as usual.

They had grumbled all the way in the train till Daddy had put his foot down. "You two are old enough at 14 to think of other people. If your grandmother wants to see you, then you will jolly well go to her and without any grumbling. One more grumble from either of you and I will keep you in Delhi for the whole summer next year. Understood?" Daddv's voice was like the crack of a whip. Anita and Vinita dared not disobev.

All this came back to Rahul as he lay in bed thinking of the mysterious conversation he had heard. Gosh! he

had never thought that his grandparents' house was haunted. And who was the ghost? He seemed to have appeared only after Appoopan (grandfather) died. Appoopan had died a little over two months ago from a fall. He had slipped off a ladder in the granary and hit his head on one of the old pestles kept there. He had lost consciousness and was found only after about five hours. He had never regained consciousness. It had been a shock to all of them especially Mummy who had adored her father. But she could not fly out to Kerala as she herself had suffered an attack of jaundice and the doctor would not allow her to travel.

How he missed Appoopan. He had been such fun. He had joined in all the children's activities. Rahul and he had been the best of friends. Oh, if only he was still here. Suddenly his eyes widened. Was that Appoopan standing at the foot of his bed? Well, he was smiling just as Rahul remembered. He smiled back and then knew nothing else.

"Wake up, sleepyhead!

We are up and ready and are going to have breakfast," Rahul found Anita's finger prodding him. He sat up rubbing his eyes.

"Stop that, Anu. I am just getting up," he said.

"Hurry if you want to come to the temple with us," said Anita going out of the room.

Rahul got up and went to the bathroom. As he brushed his teeth and had his bath, he remembered all that had happened the night before. Had he really seen someone in his room? No, it must have been a dream. He quickly got ready and ran to the dining-table.

Anita and Vinita were busy tucking into hot idlis and coconut chutney. Rahul began eating hungrily. Why did food always taste so much better in Kerala? In Delhi he could eat hardly one idli before going to school. And here he had already eaten four.

"It is the rice here," said Ammooma when he asked her. "Anyway you can have as many as you want for we had an excellent harvest and the granary is full."

The mention of the granary brought back to

Rahul the conversation between his grandmother and his parents. He wanted to discuss it with Anita and Vinita. He would talk to them on the way to the temple.

"So that is that. What do you make of it?" Rahul asked after telling his sisters all that had happened.

"I don't know what to say. Ammooma is not a fanciful person so I find it difficult to disbelieve her. But we know that there are no ghosts," said Anita.

"I can't believe that Daddy wants us to live here, in this one-horse town. I don't want to leave Delhi and all my friends," said Vinita.

"Oh, Vini, this is not too bad. In fact, I quite like Tiruvalla," protested Rahul. "And we can't leave Ammooma here all alone."

"Then she can come to Delhi with us," said Vinita, her pretty face with its dark eyes framed by black curls wearing a heavy frown. They had already reached the temple so she had to keep quiet.

"Ammayi (aunt), the ghost has struck again." The servant, Radha's cry made the children jump. They had been immersed in a game of Scrabble. They got up and ran to the kitchen where a hysterical Radha was being soothed by Mummy and Ammooma.

"Now calm down
Radha and drink this
glass of water,"
commanded *Ammooma*.
"Then tell us what
happened."

"I had gone to the granary to collect some rice. I had taken it and was about to leave when I remembered that I needed coconuts for the sambar. I turned to pick it up from the corner which is quite dark when I saw something white there. I went closer to see what it was and a coconut rose up from the floor and hit me in the back. I screamed and ran out straight to you," said Radha still trembling with fright.

"You go and lie down for a while," said



Mummy taking Radha to her room.

"The ghost seems to love food," said Anita with a giggle. "First bananas, now coconuts. Do you think it is the ghost of someone who died of starvation?"

"You mean he is determined to eat all that he did not get when he was alive?" asked Rahul joining in her giggles.

"Let us go to the granary and see what it was that really scared Radha," suggested Anita.

"I think it is a big bore," said Vinita still upset at what Rahul had heard.

"Ok, don't come if you don't want to," said Rahul. "Come, Anu, let's go and investigate."

"Oh, I'll come all right if only to see that the ghost does not pelt you with coconuts or even mangoes," said Vinita in a condescending tone.

The granary was quite dark and cold. In the light from the doorway they could see huge stone jars in which the rice was stored. The husked rice was stored in the newer aluminium drums which had a small opening at the bottom from where the rice could be taken. As

their eyes got accustomed to the darkness they could make out the coconuts in one corner.

"I'll go and open the window in that wall," said Anita. As she started walking towards the window she suddenly stopped."Hey, quit pulling me, Rahul," she said.

"Me? I haven't touched you," replied Rahul in an indignant voice. "Ouch who is pulling me now?"

"Stop it, whoever it is," cried out Vinita. The three of them looked at each other in alarm. They were not touching each other but they were all being pushed to the corner where the coconuts lay.

"Don't worry, it is only me," came a whisper. The three children stood still. Who was in the granary with them? Suddenly a faint, greenish light shone before them and as they looked, a figure dressed in a white mundu (dhoti) and a towel slung across the shoulders materialised.

"Appoopan!" exclaimed all three in a chorus. The wraith-like figure smiled. "Yes, it is I. I can't speak to you for long. But I have to tell

you something. Open the trapdoor before me and go down the steps. Now hurry."

Anita and Vinita felt their legs had turned to stone but Rahul went closer to the ghost. At first he could not see the trap-door. Then he saw an iron ring beneath the coconuts. He caught hold of it and pulled hard. Seeing this the twins also became mobile. They went to his help and the door opened. The ghost floated down the steps ahead of the children, lighting the way for them. The steps ended in a kind of hollow cave-like room. The ghost went to one of the walls and indicated a flat stone. Anita pressed against it and it moved in and sideways revealing a hole. The others crowded near her curiously. There was a small leather bag lying there. Anita picked it up.

"Take it and give it to Ammooma," said the ghost. Its voice seemed to have become fainter.

"What is it, Appoopan?" asked Rahul.

"I won't have the time to tell you. My time is almost up. Come, let me take you back to the steps," and the ghost floated ahead of them.

The three children followed, almost running to keep up with the ghost. As they reached the steps, the green light was only a blur.

"Oh, Appoopan, don't go yet," called out Rahul.

"I am sorry, my children. But my time is almost up. If you children had not found me today I could not have helped your. Ammooma. But now that I have seen you I can rest in peace. Bless you, my little ones." With these words the light vanished and the children found themselves in total darkness.

Somehow they stumbled up the steps and ran out of the granary in search of their parents.

"Mummy! Daddy!
Ammooma! Look what
we found!" They ran to
the verandah where the
three adults were
relaxing.

"What is the matter?

Why are you screaming?" asked Daddy. Anita gave the leather bag to *Ammooma*.

"What is this? It seems quite old," said Ammooma.

"Open it, Ammooma. We want to know what is in it," said Vinita.

Ammooma opened the bag and emptied its contents on to her lap. Out trickled a small pile of dull, yellowish coins. What could they be? They did not look very valuable. The children felt quite disappointed. Daddy picked up one of the coins and looked at it carefully. Suddenly his eyes brightened.

"Gosh, where did you children find this? This is a set of coins from the erstwhile Travancore
State, minted sometime in the 15th or 16th century. Very few of them are extant now.
Each of them is very valuable," he said.

The children looked at each other. Would

Mummy and Daddy believe the truth? No, Appoopan's ghost was for them only.

"We were just exploring the granary and found them in a hole," said Vinita.

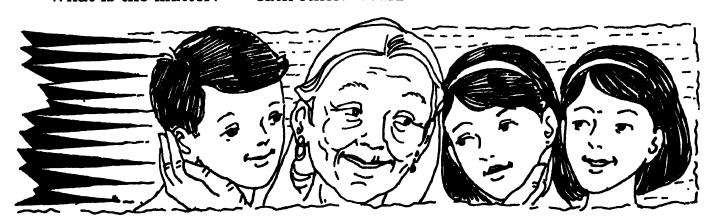
"Well, this solves all our problems. You can all come and stay here now and your father can use this money to start his business here. I am so glad you all came," said *Ammooma* wiping her eyes.

"We would love to be here but Vinita does not want to leave Delhi," said Rahul.

Vinita saw
Ammooma's face cloud
over and put her arms
around her
grandmother's neck.

"Oh, no, Ammooma, I would rather stay here with you than go back to my friends in Delhi," she såid.

Ammooma smiled and Rahul was sure so did Appoopan from up above.





Story: Homagni Chaudhuri

Illustrations: Preeti Bradoo

RS. Ganguli was worried. She and Mr. Ganguli were about to leave for an office party. The children's dinner had been kept in casseroles and, as a special treat, there was chocolate pudding. Rima was twelve now and so. unlike the earlier occasions, Mrs. Ganguli had not wanted to trouble her elder sister by asking her to keep an eye on the children. They would return before Rima's bedtime.

"Rima, we'll be back before ten," said Mrs. Ganguli. "Look after Tablu. And don't open the door for anyone at all."

"I'll look after *Didi*," insisted seven-year-old Tablu.

"Don't worry, Ma," replied Rima. "Dadu will look after us."

Mrs. Ganguli smiled even as she felt a small stab of pain. It was two years since her father had died. When he had become a widower ten years ago, her husband had insisted that his father-in-law come and stay with his granddaughter, Rima.

And even now, Rima felt her Dadu was her best friend and that wherever he might be now, he was still watching over her. Mrs. Ganguli remembered the time she had asked her father how he bought so many toys for Rima when there had been hardly any for his own daughters. He had thought a little and then. replied, "Why blame me if your grandfather didn't bother to look after you."

After their parents left, Rima and Tablu started on their homework. By half past eight, they had finished and removed the books from the dining table where they liked to sit and work. They wanted to be where the activity was and avoided the study table in their room. Rima brought in the glasses and the plates and the casseroles. One contained pulao and the other dum aloo—just what they liked. "I think," said Rima, "our dinner is much better than what Ma and Baba will have at the party." Tablu was too busy eating to reply.

After the chocolate pudding, Tablu was persuaded to go to bed where he soon fell asleep. He had played cricket in the evening and was tired out. Rima settled down in an armchair with a book by Enid Blyton. It was quiet all around. In the cold, winter night there was no one on the road outside, quite unlike summer when late strollers would be heard talking loudly. The only sounds were the ticking of the digital clock and the occasional thump of the

refrigerator compressor restarting.

Rima heard nothing. She was in Malory Towers, marvelling at the wilfulness of Sally. But suddenly, her concentration was broken by a strange sound, like somebody had scratched the pipe outside the building. Rima looked up from her book and listened. It was quiet. Even the sound of the chowkidar's lathi was not to be heard; he startedon his rounds at ten. But the very silence seemed ominous. The Gangulis lived on the first floor of a double-storied house; the elderly couple on the ground floor were away on holiday.

Rima took a deep breath and told herself, "Don't imagine things. Stop worrying." Nevertheless a shiver ran through her. Only this morning, during the tiffin recess at school, her friend, Mitul, had told her about a burglary when the children of the house were alone. Rima, looking at the clock, saw that it was forty minutes past nine.

Rima returned to Malory Towers. But no sooner had she turned a page than there was the loud sound of a heavy object falling in the kitchen and the unmistakable



cry of pain from a deep, male voice. There was no doubt that someone had climbed into the kitchen through the ventilator from where the exhaust fan had been removed for repairs. Mr. Ganguli had thought of blocking it but then decided that it was only a small opening and he would risk it being left open for a few days.

Rima fought off her fear. She was responsible for Tablu. She would run into the bedroom and shut the door. Ma and Baba would return any time now.

As Rima abandoned her book and stood up, a small, thin, horriblelooking man came out of the kitchen into the hall. He was wearing only a loin cloth and his welloiled body was shining. Rima wondered whether she had seen him before; his face looked vaguely familiar.

"Stop," shouted the man. "Where are the keys to the safe?"

The horrid man pulled out an ugly knife from his waistband and said, "If you're going to try to be funny, I'll cut off your ears. You know about the car money. You are in charge."

Rima now remembered that she had seen the man at the local garage. The previous day, that is Thursday, Rima had been there with her father who was finalising the details for the purchase of a car. The owner wanted cash. Mr. Ganguli promised to get the money from the bank and take delivery on Saturday morning. He had joked that the car was really for Rima and she would keep the money in the safe. The burglar must have overheard the conversation.

Rima was halfway between the kitchen door and bedroom. She decided to run. The man with the knife ran after her.

"Dadu," Rima cried out but then remembered that her grandfather was no



longer in this world. Her hand holding the curtain jerked in fear and the swinging curtain touched the large, heavy, chrome frame that held Dadu's photograph, displayed prominently on the wall. The photo frame fell but not straight down. It descended at an angle and its sharp corner hit the advancing man on the head. The burglar, badly injured, fell in a heap. No doubt, he would remain unconscious for a long time.

Rima called the police. Ten minutes later, her parents and the police came in together. The Sub-Inspector took one look at the form on the floor and said, "That's little Fatik. We know him well at the thana. But this time, he has been caught red-handed and that too with a big knife." He then asked Rima with awe. "How did you manage to knock him out? Such a slippery customer. Literally with oil all over himself."

The disturbance woke up Tablu and he came to the hall. He was very upset that he had missed the action. It took a long time for Rima to answer all the questions of the police and her anxious parents. Little Fatik,

handcuffed and not at all happy at the certainty of a long jail term, was carried away by the police. The Sub-Inspector once again thanked and congratulated Rima on her presence of mind.

Next morning, reading the paper, Mr. Ganguli suddenly shouted, "Rima, come here. Your name is in the paper." On an inside page, there was a large box item with the heading, 'Notorious Burglar Knocked Out By Schoolgirl.'

In the afternoon, when Rima returned from school, she saw that Dadu's photograph was

back in its usual place.
Mother had cleaned the
frame and put it back.
Surprisingly there had
been no real damage to it.
The frame had fallen at
an angle and then come to
rest gently on its back.

Rima stood in front of Dadu's photograph and wondered once again how it had all happened. Dadu looked back at her and slowly, ever so slowly, his right eye closed and opened again in an unmistakable wink. But when Rima looked again, she only saw the serene, wide-eyed likeness of her best friend. "Thank you, Dadu," she whispered.







Story: Pratibha Nath

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

T was early morning on the beach. The sun was yet to rise, but the eastern sky was a soft grey with a touch of pink. And the soft grey with a touch of pink was reflected in the great, big, green expanse of the sea: Dipa and her father walked along the beach, their feet sinking in the soft sand.

Dipa's father stopped and took off one of his shoes. "We had better remove our shoes altogether," he said. "This is the fourth time a pebble has got into mine and we haven't been walking too long." Dipa grinned. She dropped down on the sand, removed her socks and shoes, knotted the laces together, slung the shoes over one shoulder and stood up. Her father nodded approvingly. "Now you really look like an explorer," he said with a smile. "And that makes two of us." He took Dipa by the hand and they started walking again.

A crab went scuttling past them. "Mind," said Dipa's father. "It can bite. And I suggest you don't dig up a sandhill with your bare toes. There could be scorpions under

it. Big, yellow ones with poison in their tails."

Dipa jumped. "Crabs and scorpions!... Oh Father, look at those shells. All rosy red. I've never seen a red shell before. May I pick up a few?"

"Of course," said her father. "But where will you keep them?"

"See this big, roomy pocket on my T-shirt?" said Dipa. "I asked Mother to stitch it on specially because my Geography teacher asked me to get a few shells."

"So you told your teacher where you were going?"

"You bet. 'The Bitarkanika Sanctuary,' I said, 'on the estuary of our great river Mahanadi'."

"On the dot, Dipa.
Absolutely right! And now you better walk fast. We must fix a place where we can set up a watch tonight. Mr Sen's jeep will be coming for us at ten o'clock and we mustn't keep it waiting."

"Mr Sen? Oh, the nice gentleman who looks after this sanctuary?" said Dipa. "I remember him. He came to our place at Cuttack."

"Yes, he has very kindly invited us to stay with him and his wife during this trip."

They met the jeep at ten o'clock and were dropped at the Sens' residence. Mrs. Sen welcomed them warmly. "Have a quick bath," she said. "It's early lunch and then a bit of rest for you, for you'll be up all night." And what a lunch she laid on! There was vegetable curry and chunks of fried fish and prawns in mustard sauce, to say nothing of alu bhaja and mounds of snowy white, piping hot rice.

"Eat as much as you can, Dipa," said Mrs. Sen. "Tonight you'll get only a packed dinner. And by the time you get down to eating, it'll be cold."

"How is that, Kaki Ma? I thought the watch was scheduled for the night?"

"So it is. But you can't walk down the beach at the dead of night. It'll be too dark. You must take up your positions shortly after sunset and sunset here is soon after five. We're right on the eastern coast, you know."

So Dipa and her father ate and slept and at five o'clock they climbed into the jeep, with two fat haversacks between them. "Make sure we have everything," said her father. "You check while I read out the list. Dinner. Some tea in a flask. A bottle of water. A torch each. Extra sweaters. January nights can be cold. Note pad and pens, my camera and flash..."

The jeep lurched suddenly to avoid a hole in the ground and the list was forgotten. Soon they were picking their way along a narrow, bumpy, dirt track. Flocks of birds fluttered around the trees on either side, screeching for a place to roost. A pair of gulls went flying ahead of the jeep as if to show the way. They passed a lagoon with a crocodile resting on the bank. At

the far end of the lagoon a heron stood, patiently waiting for a fish or frog to come by. And then, all at once, they were at the beach. The driver looked doubtfully at the haversacks.

"Sir," he asked Dipa's father, "why don't you get a man to help you with all that load?"

"I'd like to," replied Dipa's father. "But another man might be tempted to talk and my kind of work requires absolute silence. Anyway, I'm training my daughter to help. She'll carry the lighter of the two haversacks. It isn't any heavier than her school bag," he added with a laugh. The driver saluted and took leave, "I'll be here at seven, without fail." He looked at Dipa. "Bye, Dipa didi," he said with feeling. "And good luck!"

The beach was ringing with the sound of the incoming tide. Splish splash, splish splash. Wave rode on wave, only to toss against land and end up in a fringe of surf. Dipa watched fascinated.

"Come this way," said her father. He led her to a cove where the sea had made a deep inlet for itself. The floor of the cove was an outcrop of rock. It sloped upwards and the upper end stood a good ten feet above the level of the sea. The rock went on to form a kind of arch overhead. All in all, it was a rough sort of shelter.

"Let's wait here. Try to snatch some sleep. I'll wake you up when it's time."

"But I'll miss all the excitement of waiting. Oh, please let me sit up, Father. Please."

"Okay by me," said her father. "But remember, they may not come at all tonight."

Dipa tried to keep

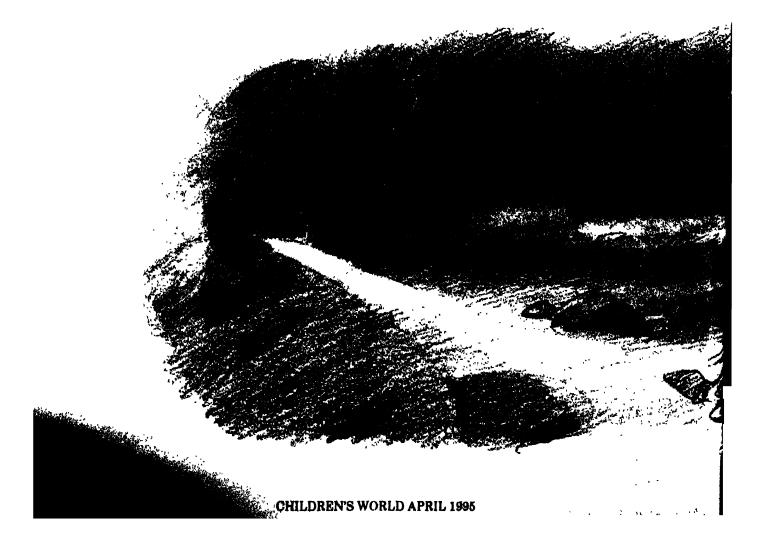
awake. But the 'swish swish' of the sea was so soothing that her eyelids began to droop. She placed her head on her knees and, with her arms for a pillow, drifted into the land of dreams.

It must have been a couple of hours later. Dipa woke up with a start. The hands of her watch stood at twelve. Up in the charcoal sky, a quarter moon sailed by on a chunk of cloud. Dipa looked around. Her father wasn't there. She ran to the foot of the cove and there he was, with his back to her,

standing as still as any of the rocks on the beach.

"Father," began Dipa.
But he gripped her by
the arm. "Shh..." he
whispered and his right
forefinger pointed in the
direction of the shore.
"They're coming!"

He flashed his torchlight. The beam cut through the darkness and fell on a huge, hardshelled, greenish-grey turtle emerging from the surf. There was another directly behind it and many more along the shoreline further up. Scores of giant turtles,



struggling to get to land.

"Let's run across the sand to see how many there are," cried Dipa's father and broke into a run. Dipa followed him. She was a sprinter at school and nobody could beat her at an obstacle race. But she had never tried to cross a horde of turtles on the march before. In the darkness of night, on a stretch of soft sand her feet sank in at every step. Crash! She slammed into the frontline of turtles moving up on the bank, lost her balance

and went flying, heels over head. Her right shoulder crunched hard against one of the turtles, so like a tank in its solid armour. As Dipa hit the ground, she opened her eyes and screamed at what she saw. A couple of feet away was the grim, fearsome face of a turtle ploughing its way along the sand, coming straight at her.

"Father!" cried Dipa.
"Father...!" But the breeze carried her voice away, far away from her father who was running ahead to a

vantage point where he could take good photographs.

Dipa rolled aside to avoid an oncoming turtle and jumped to her feet. And then she realised that she was in the midst of a sea of heaving, panting turtles. To reach her father she would have to jump over the creatures. zigzag between them. plunge where she found a foothold...After a nightmarish twenty minutes or so, Dipa finally caught up with her father. She was completely out of breath.



But so was he.

"Thousands are here already," he gasped. "And hundreds more are coming out of the sea every minute. Sometimes we get as many as three lakhs at one go. All females, they come for a single night every year just to lay their eggs. And back they go to the sea."

They flashed the torchlight on an exceptionally large turtle and watched as she plodded up the soft, deep sand. The turtle crawled inland till she had reached beyond the high water mark. Then, assured that her eggs would be safe from the incoming tide, she began to use her two back flippers to dig a hole in the ground. When the hole was about a foot deep she settled over it and stayed there for a good half an hour. When the turtle finally moved away, there were over a hundred eggs at the bottom of the hole. The turtle packed the sand back in place, using all the weight of her body like a pile driver. She was not done till the nest site was perfectly level and all but invisible. Mission accomplished, the turtle turned and plodded back into the sea, without so much as a backward glance. Within

a few minutes she could be seen tossing among the waves, soon to be swallowed up by the sea. Neither the eggs nor the hatchlings would ever know their mother.

The beach was crawling with turtles. The pale moonlight reflected on their backs made the beach look as if it was tiled with turtle shell. Dipa's father was busy clicking away with his camera.

"Never seen such a

sight," he murmured.
"What a story this will
make for my paper. With
these photographs..."

A rough voice cut him short. A hand fell on his shoulder and someone turned him round. Dipa's father was facing a man in a white uniform, a white cap on his head and an angry frown on his face. "Do you know this is a sanctuary?" he growled. "Nobody is allowed to enter without a permit."

Dipa's father took out a



small packet from his haversack. "Our permits," he said. "My daughter and I are both allowed to come to the beach round the clock, every day for fifteen days, to watch for turtles and take photographs."

The other man studied the permits by the light of his torch. Then he handed them back and smiled. "Sorry, Sir. Duty, Sir. I'm from the coastguards."

Dipa's father nodded. "Yes. I thought as much. That uniform tells all."

The coastguard smiled again. "We patrol this. beach every night to protect these turtles against their enemies. They have many enemies, I can promise you...I say. would you like to join me on my beat? Tell you what. Don't stick to me. Too many of us moving together will warn the intruders. Stay in the shadows but close enough to see what goes on. Here goes."

The coastguard made off at a terrific speed. Dipa and her father followed a few paces behind, keeping to the shadows as he had suggested. But they had to look out for rocks and nesting turtles and the ground was unfamiliar, anyway. At one point, as they skirted a particularly

large rock, they lost track of the coastguard altogether. "Where's he?" asked Dipa's father.

Dipa spun around. "Can't see him anywhere."

They stood looking at the sea and rocks and sand and listening to the sound of turtles crawling and waves breaking on the shore.

Suddenly Dipa said,
"Father, I can hear a
strange sound. Like
somebody struggling.
Listen..." They stood still,
listening intently.

"This way," cried Dipa's father. "I heard it too. Let's go and see."

They ran along the shore, stopped and listened again.

"I'm sure I heard it," cried Dipa. "A sound like someone struggling... But there aren't any turtles here at all."

"Wait," said her father.
"There are no turtles around, did you say?
What about this?" He flashed his torch towards the shoreline and Dipa screamed. Many sets of turtle tracks led away from where they stood.
Which meant that several turtles had come to nest on that stretch of beach and had gone back to the sea. But all of them had not managed to reach the

water. Three monster turtles lay upturned on the shore. Their shells against the sand, their underbellies facing the sky. And how they struggled to right themselves, threshing about with their flippers in a desperate attempt to get back to the sea again.

"This is what the coastguard meant when he said that these turtles have many enemies," murmured Dipa's father. "As these poor creatures were about to crawl back into the sea after laying their eggs, someone crept up from behind, caught them by their flippers and turned them over. It must have taken some doing. Those turtles are heavy, you know. But we'll talk later. First, let me right those three. If they remain on dry land with the sun beating down on them for one day, they'll die. Care to help?"

Dipa didn't like the sight of the slimy, slippery, threshing turtles one bit. But it was a job that had to be done. So while her father gripped a hind flipper, she gripped the front one. "One, two, three, GO!" cried her father. They heaved for all they were worth and there was the turtle, back on



her belly again and determinedly crawling out towards the sea. By the time they had righted the other two as well, both Dipa and her father were panting hard. "What does one gain by turning them on their backs?" asked Dipa between gasps.

"One gains money," returned her father. "A turtle on her back doesn't live long. When she's so weak she can't offer any resistance, she is loaded on to a boat and carried away to the nearest meat market. Turtle meat sells well. So it is welcome. And turtle meat for free is welcome any time. That's

why these beaches are full of poachers trying to overturn these turtles."

Suddenly Dipa cried, "Oh look, Father, there's a boy not too far ahead of us. I never saw him before. He's driving a stick into the ground. What on earth for?"

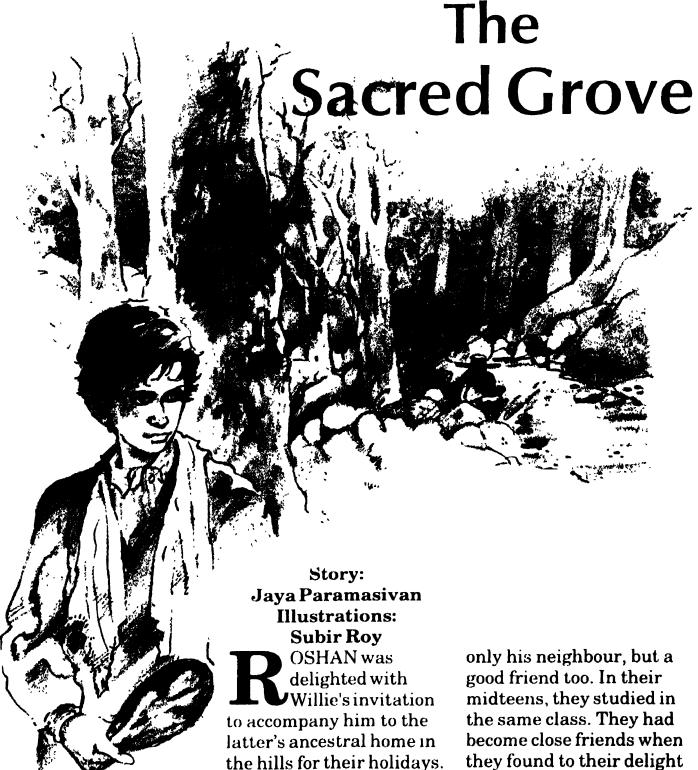
"He's looking for turtle eggs," said her father.
"He'll keep pushing the stick into the ground till it comes up yellow. Then he'll dig till he uncovers the nest underneath and help himself to all the eggs that he can carry home. See that basket by his side? People down this coast relish turtle eggs, so

poaching goes on steadily. Dogs and pigs also love them. And birds too. Look."

The eastern sky was turning light. And with the first light came a swarm of egrets and herons, also birds of prev like kites and vultures. "They've come looking for eggs and eggshells left around by poachers," said Dipa's father. "There will be more birds coming to this beach as the eggs hatch and baby turtles come out. Of every thousand hatched, only ten or twenty manage to reach the sea. The rest fall prey to carnivorous birds and animals... Ah, here's the coastguard. Any luck, Officer?" he asked.

"None," came the reply.
"I'm certain I heard
country boats offshore and
even heard voices around
here. But not a soul did I
see. Not even an upturned
turtle, though there's a
gang of poachers here
doing just that. But you
wouldn't be interested in
all this, would you?"

Dipa and her father only smiled as they picked their way along the beach. Somewhere in the direction of the dirt track, a jeep honked. And they hurried away to meet it.



they found to their delight that they shared a lot of common interests—among them rock music, science fiction and hiking.

Exuberant, ever-smiling and pleasant in manner, as most of the people from

Willie's offer was very

welcome. Willie was not

Roshan was just

recovering from a serious

illness and since everyone

insisted that a change of scene would do him good,



the hills are, Roshan found a lot of enjoyment in Willie's company. He longed to visit the hills when Willie spoke nostalgically about them. And now the opportunity had come so unexpectedly.

"The nippy air and clean climate will do nim a world of good, believe me," said Willie's father when Roshan's parents had hesitated to send him to such a distant place to convalesce. "It's only for a few weeks anyway... enough to perk him up."

"Do not worry about their lessons," Willie's parents assured Roshan's father when he expressed his fears about the lessons he had missed. "We've got a neighbour, Mr. Dutta, a retired school master, who has been helping Willie whenever he goes home for the holidays."

Thus, encouraged by their neighbours, Roshan accompanied Willie to the far Eastern hills for his holidays.

It was Roshan's first visit to a hill station. The clear, blue skies, the long stretches of undulating, soft, velvety hills, dotted with clusters of thick woods, the bubbling streams of sparkling water—everything looked so magical and worked like a tonic on him.

Willie's grandmother,
Kong Bina, a sprightly old
lady in her seventies,
lived in a picturesque
cottage just outside the
village. The cottage was
surrounded by a vast farm
where she raised poultry
and livestock. Fruit trees
grew in abundance,
bordering the rows and
rows of vegetable patches.
Kong Bina bustled around

the place, personally supervising the work of the farm hands.

Kong Bina welcomed the youngsters with delight.

"Ah." she said to Roshan, the evening of the day of their arrival, "this is just the place to put the roses back in your cheeks. Here," she said smilingly plying them with fresh farm eggs, milk and freshly baked cookies. "vou must eat plenty of these healthy foods. And this speciality of mine." She gave him a small glass of rich red coloured brew, "Cherry wine made by me here and famous everywhere. A glass of it taken everyday will cheer you up."

Roshan smacked his lips appreciatively when he tasted the sweet drink.

"Rest for a while now," she said later, showing them their rooms. "Ah, yes," she added.
"Mr. Dutta had to leave suddenly on family business and will be back after a week. So," she laughed mischievously, "there's no need to bother about studies for a while."

Roshan revelled in her hospitality. With Willie taking him for long walks down the valleys in the warm sunlight, his earlier lethargy and listlessness began to leave him and he felt increasingly healthier as the days passed by. Willie took him to the neighbouring hamlets nestling in the valleys to witness football matches and archery competitions. In the evenings they reclined in chairs by the fireside, listening to the quaint folk tales told by Kong Bina

"I never knew bird calls could sound so musical," exclaimed Roshan one morning as they walked along a new trail.

Willie grinned and said, "Each day reveals a new adventure, isn't that so? Come, I'll take you to a special place today."

He led him through a trail which ran through the valleys and dales and ended at the summit of a hillock. They stopped by a couple of dolmens—vertical and horizontal stone slabs marking the cemetery of ancient people—to admire the panorama below.

"An ideal spot for departed souls," began Roshan feeling the stones gently. "Hey," he suddenly exclaimed as his eyes dwelt on the thick foliage down in the valley. "What's that? It appears so rich in its growth... much denser and magnificent, too."

Captivated by the beauty of the picturesque setting, he paused, staring at the thick woods.

"That's the place, the special place, I wanted you to see," said Willie getting to his feet. "It's known as the Enchanted Forest or the Sacred Grove," he added in a nighterious whisper. "You can call it the most beautiful place in the country."

"Ah, come on," laughed Roshan, his laughter suddenly sounding too loud. "Everyone says the same thing about their own State. Surely there are..."

"HUSH!" Willie whirled round to face Roshan who blinked in surprise.

Willie's cheerful face had suddenly become solemn and serious. "People don't make loud noises here. Please follow me silently. I assure you, you'll be fascinated by the place. Come."

Roshan dismissed
Willie's sudden outburst
as the sensitive reaction of
any local resident proud of
his State's natural
bounty. As they
approached the fringe of
the wood he began to feel
intrigued by its cool
environment. It was
enchanting with its
canopy of thick, tall trees,



their trunks covered with a variety of creepers. Rich ferns blanketed the ground.

Suddenly Roshan became aware of the stillness. Just as they reached the fringe of the woods, a line of village women appeared from the side, climbing up the slope, carrying on their backs, baskets containing pots of water from the stream flowing below. As they passed the youngsters, they greeted them softly with a smile.

Roshan was amazed. There was not a 'cheep' to be heard as they entered the dense grove. Even birds seemed to respect the place. Sunlight streaking through chinks in the leafy canopy threw brilliant patterns on everything below. There was moisture everywhere. Only the muted sound of a gurgling brook, flowing

somewhere ahead, broke the ethereal silence. But the song of the brook, too, blended softly with the serene atmosphere.

Boots crunching softly, Roshan and Willie picked their way carefully over tree roots entangled thickly with large ferns and creepers. Orchids of myriad shapes and delightful hues hung from the branches of trees.

"Splendid!" breathed Roshan softly as they



paused near a boulder by a small stream.

"Yes," whispered Willie.
"Isn't it marvellous?" he added pointing to the ground, "This stream, if you notice, is being fed by the rich humus. The thick carpet of leaves, acting as a sponge, soaks up the rain-water and releases it slowly into the stream."

Roshan looked down curiously at the soft, spongy ground from where little rivulets of water slowly made their way to the stream.

"Many species of trees, believed to be long extinct elsewhere, have been found here," Willie went on, gazing about him in pride. "And...No!" he cried out sharply in warning as Roshan stooped low to pluck the soft leaf of a fern. "No one is allowed to pick up even a dry leaf from this place. Vandalism is an unforgivable sin here. Come," he beckoned to the bewildered Roshan as they proceeded deeper into the woods, "I'll show you the heart of the wood—where the wood sprites gather."

"Sprites?" echoed
Roshan, his voice
breaking slightly.
Clearing his throat he
asked, "You mean those

goblins, fairies and such..."

"Hush!" silenced Willie. "Remember not to raise your voice here, and please don't mock."

Respecting Willie's wishes Roshan followed him silently till they reached a small clearing where a large stone bridged the stream. It was a delightful spot from where one could watch the crystal clear water flowing by. Sunlight sparkled like jewels on the water. The boys sat absorbed by the scene for a while.

Suddenly Roshan felt a strong urge to pick up something as a souvenir to carry away with him, to remember the enchanting moments spent in the woods. He saw a small piece of driftwood bobbing in the stream near the edge of the stone bridge. It had a strange, sculpted look about it. Giving in to the temptation, Roshan quietly picked it up when Willie was not watching, and shoved it deep into his jacket pocket.

'The sprites will not mind, I am sure,' he thought to himself. 'After all I've not indulged in any vandalism.'

Later in the evening

when he was alone in the room, Roshan pulled out his precious memento for a closer look.

"Wow!" he exclaimed as he held it closer to the light, "what an exquisite piece!"

The smooth, pale wood, shaped like a hand mirror. had in its flat, oval-shaped side, a knobbiness that was almost carved. It looked like the head of a human being! "What fine handiwork of nature!" Roshan whispered in awe. running his fingers lightly over the surface. "So much like a human face...so skilfully sculpted...as if by human hands! Long face...deep set eyes...flat nose...bulging forehead...marvellous indeed!"

Suddenly a twinge of guilt assailed him. 'Have I done something wrong to have picked up this piece stealthily...' At once he shook his head to dismiss the thoughts. 'Enough of my wild imaginings...' he chided himself as he thrust the wooden piece deep inside his haversack.

That night he had a strange dream. But in the morning he could only remember it vaguely. A small man, wearing a broad brimmed, dark hat, sat on a stone with his

back towards him. He sat hunched forward as if in deep thought.

Roshan did not worry much about the dream. But when he began seeing the same dream every night, he began to feel really worried. He wondered whether he should take Willie into confidence. Should he tell him about the wooden piece and the recurring dream?

"Mr. Dutta is back home," announced Kong Bina one morning as they sat for breakfast. "He's delighted to know that both of you are keen to



study under his guidance."
She went on, "A rare
thing, indeed, to find such
a man these days. So
dedicated to education,
even after so many years
of his retirement."

Roshan pushed his thoughts away as they quickly began to get ready with their books to meet Mr. Dutta in the evening.

"You don't look sick to me," remarked Mr. Dutta to Roshan when they met. "Pink cheeks, a spring in your walk, a sparkle in your eyes." They all laughed when Roshan smiled shyly.

"Yes, indeed, Sir,"
Roshan said gratefully
pointing to the beaming
Kong Bina. "It's all
because of her tender
care."

Soon the youngsters were absorbed in their lessons. Mr. Dutta did have a way of teaching which made them finish their lessons quickly.

Roshan felt a little uneasy whenever he happened to look at Mr. Dutta's face. He could not help thinking that Mr. Dutta looked very familiar. 'Where have I met him before?'

He mentioned this to Willie later. He dismissed his thoughts when Willie told him that the old man had not ventured to the city for decades.

With studies in full swing, Roshan postponed the thought of talking to Willie about his dream, although he still dreamt of the small man sitting hunched forward, with his back towards him.

Their holiday drew to a close and the morning before their departure they sat in the sun drenched lawns outside the cottage with Mr. Dutta.

Suddenly Roshan froze. He had been staring at Mr. Dutta's face while he talked. The vivid light and shadows playing across his long face brought the contours sharply into focus. Then it struck him like lightning!

'That face!' Roshan's thoughts ran wildly. 'Of course I know why it seemed familiar. It's the face in the souvenir. The same eyes, nose, forehead...Oh!'

A sudden chill crept up his spine. All those days he had not dared to pull out the souvenir from its hiding place for another look. Somehow he felt that the dream had a strange connection with it...and was loath to see it. But how could he forget the face! His mind whirled

madly.

"...must go now!"
Mr. Dutta was saying as he rose to go. "Ah, yes, you could accompany me tomorrow," he added smilingly to the youngsters. "I'll be going down by car to the town after lunch and can drop you at the station."

Roshan mumbled his thanks. He was thoroughly shaken. A strange dread gripped his heart and he went about the farm with Willie, in a daze. Would he get the same dream again that night? Would it be the same figure or another?

"You'd better have an early night," said Kong Bina, clearing the table after dinner, "so that you will feel fresh and bright for the long drive to the station tomorrow."

"Hey, what's the matter?" exclaimed Willie noticing Roshan's distraught face as they retired to their rooms later. "You don't have a headache, do you? Shall I get you a cup of hot lemon tea or..."

"No, no, Willie."
protested Roshan patting
his shoulder. "But thanks,
anyway. I'll be fine in the
morning. Perhaps it's the
sadness at the end of a
glorious holiday...to leave

this heavenly place..." He tried to smile. Somehow he couldn't bring himself to confess his fears to Willie.

"You can always come here again, you know," said Willie as he bade him good night. "That's the spell of this place. It beckons to you again and again."

"Yes, I know," said Roshan as he turned back to go. "Willie," he added hastily as a thought hit him, "could we visit the Enchanted Forest once more in the morning?

Willie agreed.

Roshan lay awake for a long time. He had decided, in a flash, to put the driftwood back in the forest. He dreaded to look at the piece. He had realised that the only way to stop the recurrence of the dream was to return the driftwood to where it belonged.

'Why did I do it at all?'
he agonised again and
again as he tossed in bed.
'I'm thoroughly ashamed
of myself for not
respecting Willie's beliefs.
I'll put it back in the same
place tomorrow without
Willie's knowledge. That
way, he will not be aware
of any misdeed.' Roshan
drifted off in to an uneasy
sleep towards the wee

hours of the morning.

There! The same dream! The silhouette of a small man with a broad brimmed hat sitting hunched with his back towards him.

There was a loud knock at the door. Roshan sat up with a jerk. It was morning. He hurried to open the door.

Willie stood at the door, wrapped from head to foot in a thick blanket. "I've got this sudden cold..." he explained between sniffs. "What a time to catch it! Now I've got to stay behind, and travel later...Kong Bina has given me some medicine." He paused and went on, "Sorry, old chap, I can't go with you to the Sacred



Grove."

Roshan's heart sank at the thought of going down alone to the forest. But it would be easier to replace the driftwood if he went alone and he would return quickly. So having assured Willie that he could find his way to the forest without difficulty, Roshan pulled out the driftwood from his haversack and shoved it quickly into the pocket of his jacket. He did not even want to see the sculpted face. All he wanted was to get rid of it.

Hurriedly finishing his breakfast, Roshan ran through the valley. In the bright, clear daylight, the anxiety of the previous night seemed to fade. He sighed with relief to see some villagers walking down towards the stream.

'Everything appears normal,' he assured himself trying to calm his racing heart as he took long strides down the velvety slopes towards the thick, silent woods. Once he entered the woods, he slowed down and proceeded carefully through the thick vegetation.

The gurgling of the stream was the only sound as he approached the stone bridge on which he had rested earlier. Quickly he went to the spot from where he had picked up the driftwood.

'There,' he thought to himself with relief as he pulled out the wooden piece from his pocket, 'all I've got to do now is to place it exactly where I'd picked it up from and hurry back.'

Just as he leaned over to drop it in the water he glanced at the driftwood and froze in horror! The face sculpted in the oval part of the wood was *not* that of Mr. Dutta but *his*!

Trembling with shock he continued to stare at the young face etched on it. At that precise moment, he sensed a presence behind him!

Roshan whirled round in terror and the driftwood dropped from his hands into the stream. He gasped in astonishment at the scene confronting him.

The figure of the small man wearing a broad brimmed hat, who had haunted his dreams all these days, sat at the end of the stone bridge, with a difference—he was now facing him! Thin fingers clasped his knees as he sat hunched forward.

In the dazed state of mind that he was in, all Roshan could make out was that the face in the shadows was neither smiling nor scowling in disapproval. It was serene. Only the eyes shone brilliantly.

"I knew you would come, son," a deep, resonant voice whispered. "I wanted you to come here on your own. You realise now that we dislike anyone disturbing the natural set-up here. I came every night to you, to persuade you to return what was not yours. This place, remember, is for everyone to experience happiness and bliss...to learn much...remember... remember..." the voice trailed off and the figure too disappeared like a twirl of mist!

"I... ah... I..." Roshan stammered and stuttered. He wanted to apologise for his action to whoever it was who had been constantly watching him. Dazed with the eerie experience, he glanced back at the driftwood bobbing in the stream.

The face seemed to laugh merrily at him! Startled at its uncanny resemblance to his own face, Roshan began to run back through the woods. He never could remember later how he managed to climb up the slope

towards the stone dolmen. Clutching the stone for support and panting heavily with the strain, he stood for a while to steady his racing heart.

Calming down, Roshan realised to his surprise that he had not felt any dread or terror during the encounter with the strange spirit. It was only a feeling of shame he had felt—like a child being admonished gently by a father for a mistake.

He looked at the serene woods below and whispered, "Yes, I understand now. I loved being there in your midst... I would love to come again sometime soon...thank you for the experience..."

Was it his imagination or did he really see a small figure with a broad brimmed hat standing under the shade of the trees raising a hand in farewell?

After lunch, Roshan bade farewell to Kong Bina and Willie and left with Mr. Dutta in his car. As they drove along. Roshan hardly listened to Mr. Dutta's friendly chatter about the lovely land where he had decided to spend the rest of his life. Only one question nagged Roshan's mindhow had Mr. Dutta's face come to be imprinted on the driftwood? He had to find out.

"Sorry to interrupt you, Sir. Please tell me," Roshan paused and plunged on, "what do you think of the Enchanted Forest, the Sacred Grove, and the beliefs of the local folk about it."

Mr. Dutta remained silent, looking out of the

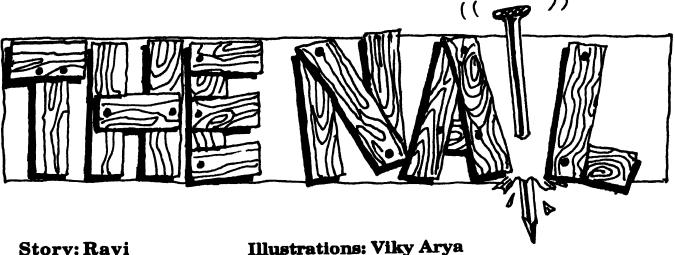
car window at the scenery rushing past. Then he spoke softly.

"Yes," he said, "they do have quaint beliefs. I found out nearly a decade ago when I first visited the Enchanted Forest. I now respect and revere their age-old beliefs. No doubt about it." He shook his head slowly, "There seems to be a strong power guarding the Sacred Grove..." his voice trailed off into a whisper.

Roshan now knew his answer. 'Mr. Dutta too, must have had a similar experience which left his imprint on the driftwood and...' He was filled with a chilling thought—now his face, imprinted on the driftwood, would remain as evidence of his misconduct, until someone else picked it up...







Story: Ravi

N a small village not far away from the city __of Delhi. lived an Ustad called Chaku. He was a muscleman, tall, well-built with a handlebar moustache that almost touched his ears. He ran a wrestling school. He had many students, young and old.

Every evening, after the class, the Ustad would sit around with his students, telling them of all the muscular adventures that he had had. He spoke of how he had handled six highway robbers who had stopped the bus he was travelling in, single-handedly. He narrated another incident, when he was faced with a mad bull. He had downed it by holding onto its horns and bending its neck till it broke.

The *Ustad* always said that strength lay in the

mind and not in the limbs. He would say that even a frail person could fight a powerful man if his will was strong.

One evening, as the Ustad and his students sat around, the topic of ghosts came up. The students asked the *Ustad* if he was scared of ghosts. to which he said no. One of the older students asked him if he would take up the challenge of going into the cemetery at midnight to hammer a nail into the large peepal (Ficus religiosa) tree that grew there. The Ustad readily accepted the challenge.

So the day was fixed. Around midnight, the Ustad and his pupils collected outside the cemetery. The Ustad overheard one student telling another that ghosts lived on peepal trees and the one that the

Ustad was to drive the nail into, was believed to house many of them. The Ustad broke out in a cold sweat. What if there really were ghosts on that tree? But he realised he could not back out now. His prestige was at stake.

He took the hammer and the nail, but before leaving the Ustad told his students to wait outside till he returned.

As he walked towards the tree he heard some sounds. He froze. He looked around but could see nothing. He took a few more steps and he heard some sounds again. The *Ustad* was, by now, sweating from head to toe. His throat felt dry and lips parched. There was no way out now. His feet felt so heavy that he had to make an effort to move.

The Ustad realised that he was too far from the

gate, but closer to the tree. He decided to go towards the tree. As he reached the tree he heard some sounds again. The Ustad froze and looked around. Nothing. Slowly he picked up the hammer and the nail. As he was about to drive the nail in, he heard sounds again. The *Ustad* was now so scared that he could hear his own heart beat. He cursed himself for getting into such a mess. Looking over his shoulder for danger, he drove the nail into the tree trunk. After making sure that the nail was firmly in, he decided to dash back. His very first step pulled him back.

The students were waiting at the gate. It was over an hour since the Ustad had gone in. They decided to go home and return in the morning to see what had happened. Early next morning, the students gathered outside the cemetery. When the sun was high enough, they walked in towards the peepal tree. When they reached it, they found the Ustad dead.

He had driven the nail through his *kurta*, into the tree.





NEELANJANA, The LPRINCESS

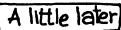
STORY: SHOBHA GHOSE.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Beigee







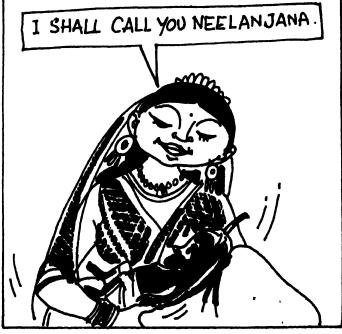






IT WILL BRING BAD LUCK TO OUR LAND. THE KING SHOULD HAVE GOT RID OF HER.















Story: Deepa Agarwal

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

AMU wasn't sure whether he saw the dog first or the bottle. Perhaps he saw them both together. Whatever it was, he saw a large, empty bottle lying in a drain—and a dog nearby. He wanted to pick up the bottle. He could sell it to the raddiwala for a rupee at least. But the dog made him hesitate. His experience as a ragpicker told him that you had to be careful with dogs, even the stray ones who were particular about guarding their territory. And when they saw someone like himdressed in an old T-shirt and frayed shorts, with that tell-tale sack—they turned all the more

ferocious.

Besides, twelve-year-old Ramu could tell that this one was definitely not a stray. With his shaggy, but well-groomed coat and bright, alert eyes—he looked quite classy. Perhaps he belonged to the large house nearby. Why wasn't he barking, though?

Ramu wanted that bottle—needed it, rather. He decided to take a chance. Keeping an eye on the dog, he inched closer. The dog didn't react. It just watched him with its head cocked to one side. And if Ramu didn't know better, he could have sworn that it looked friendly. He grabbed the bottle quickly. But it was

embedded in the sticky mud and it took him a while to pry it out. A little nervous now, he decided to suppress his fear by whistling. He knew that dogs sensed fear—were quicker to attack when they felt it in the air.

To his utter surprise. the dog sprang up and trotted over to him. For a second, Ramu froze, bottle in hand. But the dog didn't snarl or bare its teeth. It didn't seem threatening at all. It looked, yes, it definitely looked friendly. Mystified... Ramu picked up the bottle, still whistling. It was a film tupe he was whistling. A rather old one. He didn't know where he had picked it up from,

but it had got stuck in his head. In fact, he whistled it so much that his mother complained. He placed the bottle in his sack and walked away, careful not to show haste.

His sack was quite full now. So he decided to head back to his *jhuggi* and sort out the stuff. But after a while he got the feeling that someone was following him. Idly, he glanced back. He almost jumped out of his skin when he saw it was the dog!

For a moment, Ramu, panicked. Why was the dog trailing him? He hadn't stolen anything. The bottle had been lying in the drain as if it had been thrown there. On the other hand, he wasn't carrying anything to eat, either.

Just then the dog darted ahead of him. Ramu shrugged, a little relieved. It was probably off on a jaunt of its own.

So he walked on, still whistling the tune under his breath. But when he turned off the road, on to the slushy path that wound between the cluster of jhuggis where he lived, he discovered that the dog was still with him!

That really bothered him, now. He tried to shoo

it off. "Run away," he cried. "Get lost. You've landed up in the wrong place." For good measure, he threw a stone, taking care that it didn't actually hit the dog. He just wanted to scare it away, not hurt it. The dog ducked, but stayed put.

"What's the matter, dog?" Ramu cried, bewildered, exasperated. "Taken a fancy to me? Why don't you be sensible and go home? Shoo! Run away!"

But the dog just wagged its tail and pawed the ground eagerly. Ramu didn't know how to respond to that! He turned on his heel and walked on, hoping the dog would go away on its own.

"Kyoon, Ramu, from where did you get hold of the dog?" Birju called out from his jhuggi. "It seems an expensive one." Bald and skinny, Birju was one of the several men in the . colony without regular employment.

"I haven't got hold of it, as you can see," Ramu replied irritably. "It's just following me."

"That's a good one.
You're smart, aren't you!
There are ways and ways
of making a dog follow
one, you know. And ways
of making a good thing

out of it."

Ramu didn't reply. He just walked on. He didn't like Birju. He was involved in too many dubious activities and was always trying to draw Ramu into his schemes.

He put his sack down outside his jhuggi and went inside. The first thing he did was to tip himself a drink of water from the clay surahi. But even as he drank, he couldn't help peeping out through the narrow opening, that was the doorway. The dog had stopped too! It sniffed around inquisitively for a while. Then it settled down in front of the jhuggi with a contented sigh.

Ramu shook his head wonderingly. Had the dog taken a fancy to him? It made him feel a little amused. In fact, it gave him a bit of a thrill to think that a classy-looking dog like that should have taken to him so.

But it also made him uneasy. What would his mother say? She hadn't returned from work as yet. She'd left his food on a thali—two thick rotis and some dal. After he had finished one, he got an idea. He took the second roti, broke it up in an old aluminium plate

and placed it near the dog a little cautiously. The dog opened one eye and thumped its tail lazily.

Then it shifted a little.

And as Ramu watched, it got up slowly and sniffed at the food.

It's going to eat,' Ramu thought. But the dog moved away instead, with a helpless, apologetic glance at Ramu.

"So, it's not eating!"
Birju's brassy laugh
resounded in his ear. "You
think you can keep it
happy with those scraps—
a fine dog like that?"

"Who asked for your opinion?" Ramu replied feeling his ears burn. It hurt him, somehow that the dog hadn't eaten.

"Listen, Ramu," the man whispered. "If you want a good deal for the dog, I'll get it for you...I'll take my cut, of course."

"Can't you understand that I'm not selling it!" Ramu yelled. "And I haven't brought it from anywhere. It came on its own."

"So it's like that!"
Birju's eyes rolled menacingly. "Don't try to be too smart, bacchoo."

Suddenly Ramu heard a low growl. The dog was advancing towards Birju, showing its teeth in a threatening snarl. Birju

700



backed away, scared; then he wheeled around and took to his heels.

Ramu laughed and laughed. He felt a spurt of affection for the dog. He wanted to stroke that shaggy fur to show it. He could almost feel the soft, warm sensation. But something held him back—he didn't know what. It wasn't fear—it was something else. It was as though his arm had frozen and wouldn't move when he wanted it to.

He sorted out the day's takings and took them to the *raddiwala* to sell—paper, glass, metal and plastic—whatever he had

been able to salvage. The dog trotted behind him, as he set off, whistling his favourite tune.

"Keep the dog away," said Karim *mian*, the *raddiwala*.

"It's harmless," Ramu said.

"From where did you pick it up? You better be careful. It looks expensive.

Ramu sighed. "You won't believe me," he said, "but it followed me."

"Take my advice. Take it back wherever you got it from. You don't want any problems with the police, I'm sure."

Ramu shrugged. It was no use trying to explain to anyone. They wouldn't believe that he had tried his best to get rid of the dog. He looked at it sitting there comfortably and peacefully. It looked quite at home!

Then he saw a man coming down the lane. From his lurching, sideways gait he could guess who it was—Kailash the drunk. He seemed to have started early today.

Amused, and a little disgusted, he watched him.
When he got close to the dog, Kailash seemed to stumble.
Ramu opened his mouth to warn him, but it was too late. He'd already stepped on the dog!

Ramu held his breath. He waited for the dog to yelp, to snarl with rage and snap. He waited for Kailash's howl of pain.

But nothing happened!
No, something did happen. Something so extraordinary, so unbelievable if he hadn't seen it with his own eyes—!
Kailash's foot seemed to pass right through the dog—as if it wasn't there at all! As if it was just air!
Not flesh and bone and muscle and fur.

Ramu gulped and shook

his head to clear it. Was he imagining things? Then he heard Kailash's voice, slurred, stumbling over the words, "Who's throwing water on my foot? Hain, hain?"

Ramu would have laughed if he hadn't been so shaken. His hair stood on end and his chest felt

tight. The dog looked up. Its eyes were apologetic, its tail wagged slowly, uncertainly. Ramu bent and gingerly put his hand on its head.

He went cold. An uncontrollable shudder passed through his frame. With an effort he stood up, sweating. The dog stood up too. It looked sad.

Ramu thought. But he had seen it with his own eyes, felt it. The dog wasn't real! It—it was a ghost—if such things were possible. Terrified, he broke into a run. He didn't dare look back. He knew that the dog must be following him.

He dived inside his jhuggi and sat there

shaking all over. He'd heard about ghosts attaching themselves to people—haunting them. But he'd never heard of a ghost dog!

Then all of a sudden, he heard it barking. For a moment he waited. When it didn't stop, he peeped out cautiously. He heard a man's loud curse, then a cry. And caught a glimpse of Birju running for dear life! In spite of his terror. Ramu smiled. And when the dog turned to him and wagged his tail proudly as if he'd done something great—his fear vanished altogether. Ghost or not. the dog liked him—as much as a real, live dog!

"Shabash, Tiger," he said, deciding on the name on the spur of the moment.

The dog looked so pleased that he desperately wished he could pat him. To his surprise, for a moment it suddenly hung its head dejectedly. As if it had guessed what Ramu was thinking and was sorry too.

"What's that dog doing there, outside our *jhuggi*?" his mother asked as soon as she came back.

"It's just sitting there, Ma," Ramu shrugged.

"It belongs to somebody. It has a collar...perhaps we should hand it over..."

"To whom, Ma?" Ramu said quickly. "If I tell the policeman he'll say that I've stolen it and probably beat me up."

"Yes," his mother sighed. "But it makes me uncomfortable to see it there."

"It's not troubling anyone," Ramu said stubbornly. "Let it be."

"All right." His mother got busy kneading atta for their evening meal. But her words stuck in his head. He wanted to let the dog remain—but it was bound to create problems.

The next morning when he set out on his rounds, he suddenly got a bright idea. Suppose he took the dog back to the place where he'd found it? It might decide to stay back. The idea was worth trying. So he set off, whistling the same tune. But his footsteps dragged. He felt a strange regret. He didn't really want to part with Tiger.

'Don't be stupid,' he scolded himself. You can't let it hang around. Sooner or later you're going to get into trouble. Birju might tell the police out of sheer meanness. Someone else might notice that it was a ghost dog. And—they might even try to shunt them out of the settlement. But—

A short, sharp bark made him halt with a start. He turned. Tiger was barking fiercely.

He looked around but there was no one, nothing to be seen. "What is it. Tiger?" he began irritably. Then he stopped short, sucked in his breath hard. Right in front of him—an open manhole gaped! One step—and he would have plunged headlong into it! Ramu's head swam. Two months ago a boy from this settlement had fallen into this manhole. He was always careful, always looked out for it. But today he had been so preoccupied...

"Tiger," he breathed. His throat seemed to fill up. "Tiger!"

Tiger wagged his tail so hard that his whole body swung to and fro. He trotted along with Ramu, who stumbled on, still dazed, not even trying to find junk to fill his sack.

The stench from the rubbish dump brought him back with a jerk. There were a couple of cows, a stray dog or two rooting around as usual. As soon as they saw Tiger, the dogs whimpered, fled with their tails between their legs. And after a minute the cows ambled off too!

Ramu couldn't help

smiling. Tiger definitely had his uses. He picked up a stick and began to poke about the rubbish. He sorted out bits of metal. glass, plastic, anything that could fetch something from the raddiwala.

Then his hair prickled. Someone cried out, "Tiger! Ma—look, there's Tiger!"

Ramu's heart almost stopped. Slowly, he turned. A woman stood on the other side of the road, tall, welldressed. There was a boy with her, of chunky build, with stiff, unruly hair, his own age perhaps. He was pointing to Tiger.

Ramu felt his skin tighten, his head whirl. Was he dreaming?

Then he heard the woman say gently, patiently,

"It's some other dog, Nitin. Tiger's dead. You know that."

"But Ma—he's so much like Tiger! That patch on his ear. On his front paw. How can another dog be exactly the same?"

Ramu looked at Tiger. His eyes were gleaming, he looked about to burst with unbearable excitement. His tail wagged, in slow motion. But at the same time he seemed to be shrinking, holding himself back. It was as if he was longing, dving to go—jump all over the boy but couldn't dare to...

"Come on, Nitin. You know it can't be Tiger," the boy's mother said softly. "Come on." She pulled at his arm and

began to walk ahead briskly.

But the boy began to look back again and again. Then Ramu got another shock. He heard the tune—his tune! The boy was whistling it under his breath. And Tiger, poor Tiger was quivering all over. His eyes looked sad, watery and his tail thumped on the ground, slowly, helplessly.

"So that's where you belong..., belonged," Ramu said softly. "But they won't have you back now." He looked into Tiger's gloomy eyes and said, "Never mind, friend. You're welcome to stay with me as long as you wish."

He felt something cold brush his legs and smiled





Story: RS

HE new batch of medical students were subjected to ragging in a college. The ragging ranged from mimicking to doing a take-off of film stars to boys acting like girls and vice-versa.

The resident students were, however, ragged in a different way. Each student had to go to the morgue at midnight and put a ladoo into the mouth of one of the corpses. This was not easy, specially for a student who had just joined medical college.

So the day came for Anil to perform the unpleasant task. The seniors came to his room that hight and handed him ladoo. Anil was a

Illustrations: Gautam Roy

timid boy, and the very thought of going into the morgue put him off. What was worse was that he would have to open the mouth of a dead person.

He tried to make excuses to get out of it, but the seniors were insistent. Just then another new student reassured Anil that it was nothing to be scared of since he had done it only the previous night.

Reassured by his friend, Anil decided to go ahead. When he reached the morgue, he was trembling. His mind would not work. He had difficulty in opening the door to the morgue. Once inside, he felt even more scared as there was only a small light burning at

the far end of the hall. As his eyes got accustomed to the darkness, he saw a row of tables, each with a body, covered with a white cloth.

Anil was so scared that he decided to go to the one closest to the door. He approached it and slowly removed the cover. With the ladoo in the right hand, he opened the corpse's mouth with his left. As the mouth opened, he pushed the ladoo in and ran. Just as he reached the door, he heard a voice say, "One more, please!" Anil fell unconscious.

Then another voice was heard, "You shouldn't have hidden under the table and said that."



AJAT yawned and glanced out of the window, after stretching his limbs.
Outside, the day was slowly breaking. Rajat went to the window and stood admiring his first dawn in this small town, where his father had been transferred from the city.

Rajat noticed a dog walking determinedly on the road. He loved dogs, so he whistled but strangely the dog took no notice and continued walking on his way. Rajat shrugged, forgetting about the incident after a few minutes.

Next morning, Rajat again saw the dog crossing the road in front of his house. This time Rajat threw him a biscuit but as before there was no reaction. The dog, instead of sniffing or eating the biscuit, continued walking on his way.

What a peculiar dog,'
Rajat wondered. 'And
where on earth does he go
everyday?'

The next day Rajat

decided to follow the dog.
At the end of the road on which Rajat's house was situated, was a park. Rajat saw the dog running about the park in search of something among the flower-beds.

In the evening Rajat told his private tutor, Dinesh babu, about the dog.

"You must be talking about Raja," he said, and told Rajat the entire story.

Raja's master, Hari babu was an honest, hard working, college lecturer. Every morning he used to

take Raja to play in the park. Hari babu would throw a red ball far and wide and Raia would run to look for it and return with it. Then Hari babu received his transfer orders to a college in North Bengal. There he would have to stay in a mess; so taking Raja with him was out of the question. But parting with his dog was very painful. So Hari babu brought Raja to the park and instead of throwing the red ball, while Raja was chasing butterflies, he threw a stone to a far flung corner of the park. While Raja frantically searched for the

ball, Hari babu left for the station to catch his train.

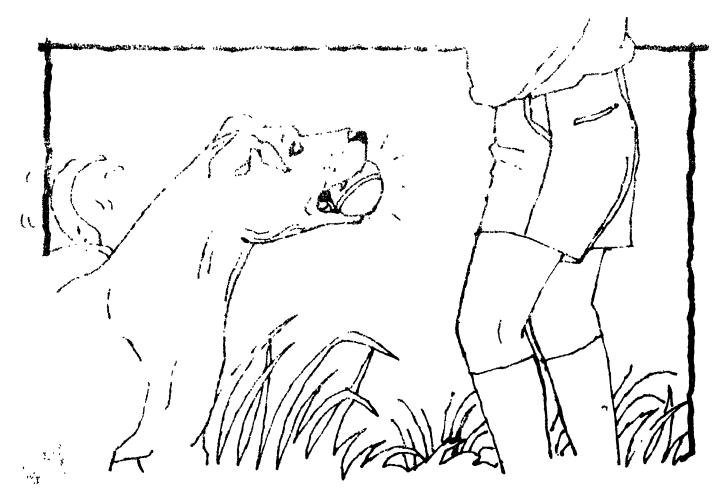
Hari babu had asked his neighbour to look after Raja, but the neighbour was not interested in keeping a street dog as a pet. So Raja was without a home and a master. Hari babu might have forgotten his pet but Raja still felt that if he could find the red ball, he could find his master again.

Early one morning, when Raja was searching among the flower-beds for the ball, he noticed the red ball nestling in the undergrowth. Leaping with joy, Raja ran towards the ball and placed his paw on it.

As soon as he turned, disappointment was writ large on his face.

Rajat, and not his master, was standing before him. Slowly Rajat walked upto Raja, bent down and stroked his head. Raja looked unsure at first, then slowly wagged his tail. He seemed to have formed a link between the red ball and Rajat.

Rajat's parents accepted Raja as a member of their house. The people were happy to see Raja and his young master with the red ball every day in the park. For Raja had not only found a new master, but also a new home.





T happened when I was thirteen. My father was in the Rajasthan cadre of the Civil Services and had to tour a lot through the districts. I was studying in a boarding school in Mussoorie and usually joined him during the holidays. My mother had died when I was seven. and rather than leave me in an empty house, Pa took me with him whenever I was home on holiday.

That year, an epidemic of chicken pox in school led to extra long holidays, and I was with Pa all through the winter.

Winter in Rajasthan is a delightful experience, with sunny afternoons and bitterly cold nights. I enjoyed it because I knew cart-lived tause it was so mit to the than the grading summer heat.

Pa and I were in his car, on a straight road through the desert. The sand stretched endlessly on either side of us, with patches of green where someone exceptionally hard-working had cultivated the land. From time to time we would pass a village, and for a few minutes, there would be noise, people and activity. Then again, there was quiet and the sound of the wind rushing past the window.

As evening crept up on us, it grew colder and colder, and I huddled under the blanket that Pa had thrown onto the seat.

sputtered and courand the car began and almost gasp for breath. Pa cursed softly under his breath. I sat up and looked at the country-side around. If we were to be stranded in the desert, would it be asking for too much to be near some houses or a village?

Luck was on our side, for the car gave its last hiccup and stalled just hundred metres from a small monument. 'It must be a temple,' I thought and looked around for signs of life. Sure enough, there was a mud and brick house some distance away, with a thin curl of smoke coming out of an invisible vent in its roof.

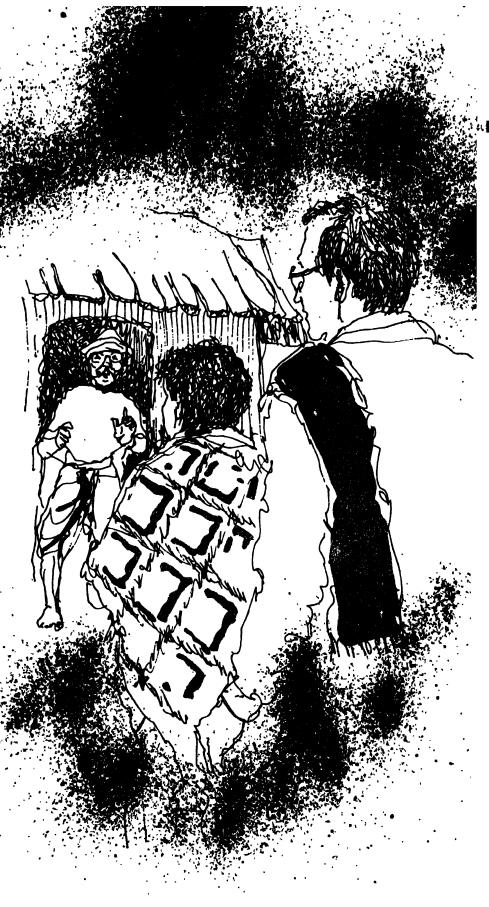
Pa stayed beside me as the driver got out in a put his head under the binet of the car. With expression, he can window and white Pa. "We'll haye the until the morning help," he said, turn me.

"Someone may be living there," I pointed out. Pa turned and looked into the distance.

"I didn't notice that house," he said, getting out of the car and starting to walk towards the faint light that shone from there. Hurriedly, I followed him.

There was nothing special about that little hut, nothing that would make anyone suspect the tragedy that had touched the life of the elderly man who lived there. He made us welcome in a curiously unsmiling way, told us we could spend the night and asked us if we would share his dinner. Pa looked around the smallspace and seeing no signs of a woman's presence, he hastily said, "We can pool our resources. I have something packed too, and if I leave it in the car, it may spoil."

The man shrugged. I couldn't tell whether he



was in agreement with Pa or whether he was insulted by Pa's suggestion, but his silence made me uncomfortable. "I'll get it," I said, eager to get out of the unsmiling presence of the owner of the house.

I jogged out of the hut and back towards the car. It was completely dark now but above me, the clear winter sky was lit by a million lamps. The stars winked at me as I looked at them. I looked down again to follow the path and found myself just a foot away from the monument I had thought was a temple. There was nothing inside. No bell. No statue. No steps. Just a raised platform, four narrow pillars and a domed roof. What is this place?' I wondered. 'It isn't a temple. It cannot be a look-out point for the fields because they are on the other side, and the hut itself has a good enough view of them.'

I jumped onto the platform. The floor was white and smooth. Who, in their right senses, would put marble on this, and live in a house with a mud floor? I swung around a pillar and jumped down, then jogged on to the car.

When I got back to the

house with the tiffin carrier, I found Pa deep in conversation with the old man. I didn't pay attention to what they were saying—obviously Pa was keen on hearing about the farm, small as it was.

Unnoticed, I wrapped myself in the blanket I had been using in the car, and sat down on a mat in the corner. The voices droned on and I drifted off to sleep. When I awoke, there was a deathly silence. Pa and the driver were half-sitting, half-lying on the mat with me and they were fast asleep. The old man was not in the room.

Suddenly, I was scared. Who knew what that strange man could do to us as we slept? I stood up, took the blanket with me for it was cold. and stepped out of the house. The new moon was hanging like a smile in the sky, but I did not feel like smiling back. A dark, unreasonable fear descended over me. At the same time, a magnetic urge kept me walking along the sand towards the monument. I reached it without knowing that I had taken a step.

I sat down on the marble floor and looked around—and suddenly,

she was there. Up to her knees in the sand, about fifteen feet away from me, with her arms upraised. She seemed to be struggling to get up and her mouth was open in a scream I could not hear. She must have been about twenty years old—an adult—and even to my young eyes in the starlight, she was beautiful.

Long, dark hair floating behind her in a breeze that didn't touch me, eyes staring and fixed on mine in desperation. I knew she wanted my help, but I could not move. Slowly, she sank out of sight. As her gaze left mine, I seemed to be released from the spell that had kept me immobile.

I threw off my blanket and raced towards the arm that still rose out of the sand—then I stopped. If there was quicksand ahead, I could go down too. I'm only thirteen, I told myself. I can't pull her out on my own. I'll run for help. I gave that hand a last look and turned and fled towards the house.

I thought I was screaming for the adults to come out and rescue the woman, but actually, my throat was so dry that I could not utter a sound.



In fear as a
ist hold of my
ist hold of my
is held me in a viseis opened my
is an to shout, "Save her
before she sinks," but no
sound came out. Then, as
suddenly as I had been
caught, I was released.

I whirled and bumped into the old man. "Th— there," I stammered:

He put a finger to his lips. "Ssh. The others are sleeping. Don't disturb them. They are tired."

die!" I finally managed to say, looking back in the direction from which I had come. "Hurry, it may be too late," I gasped.

The old man shook his head and sighed, "So you saw her."

I looked at him in horror. "Do you nean to say that you SAW her sink and didn't do anything to help her? Come, NOW—we may still be able to get her out alive!"

He laughed—a short, humourless bark—and sat down in the shadow of the wall. He looked out towards the road. I realised that his gaze was fixed on the monument. "I'll get my father. He'll know what to do," I said and moved towards the door.

His hand swung out again and I was trapped.

"Sit down," he ordered.
"Make no noise and I will tell you who she is."

Something in the way he said it made me realise that I was in his power. What could I do against the will of this strange man? I was young. I was fleet of foot. But I was frightened. I was not in control.

"You saw a ghost," he began.

"No, no," I cried. "She's there. She went into the quicksand."

"There's no quicksand here. It was a ghost," he repeated. "The ghost of my twenty-year-old daughter who died twenty years ago." My hair stood on end as I listened to him. "It happened on a night such as this. The moon, new and full of promise. Like her. She was so young, so beautiful and so much in love with her husband. Or maybe, she was in love with the idea of love. He was much older than her, and he died unexpectedly, mysteriously. And then, she burnt herself on his funeral pyre there." He gestured towards the monument.

The horror I felt must have transmitted itself to

the old man, for he touched my shoulder gently. "Sati. It is called sati. The British abolished it 150 years ago, but in communities like ours, it sometimes happens. Even now."

"Why couldn't you stop her?" I asked.

"I was not here. By the time I heard about her husband's death and came here it was too late. And I never knew if she did it voluntarily or if she was forced. But this much I do know. She does not rest in peace. She's here. She comes back. And tonight, she has chosen to come to you. There must be a reason for it. You are the chosen one."

The way he said it made me feel that I had been marked for death. I shuddered. I wanted to jump up and shout, "I don't believe it. That was not a ghost. And I have not been chosen by a ghost for anything." But I was still young then, so instead of reasoning with the old man. I ran inside and roused my father and the driver. "Let's get away from here, Pa," I cried in terror. "Let's go away just now."

Pa had never seen me behave so unreasonably.

"What is the matter? Go back to sleep," he said, but I persisted. My pleas became frantic and the driver woke up. I must have seemed a bit crazy. To calm me down and show me that there was no way we could leave, he went to the car and tried to start it. Almost as if a magic wand had touched it, the engine started up with a smooth purr. My father and the driver were astounded. They allowed the motor to run for some time, thinking that the wheezing and coughing would start again. But it didn't. Since they had had sufficient rest. Pa said a few words of farewell to the old man; we got in and set off.

The burden of fear on my mind lessened as we moved away, and soon I fell into a restless sleep. I was cold. So very cold. I remembered that I had left my blanket behind on the marble slab that marked the site of the sati. I tried to get up and fetch the blanket, but strong hands held me down. I felt that I was drowning. The cold hands of the girl pulled me into the sand with her. I screamed for help, but sank lower and lower with her. She had chosen me



for death. The old man had implied as much.

By the time I awoke and knew what was happening around me, three days had passed since we had stopped on that road in the desert. Pa and I were back in Bikaner and he told me I had been ill and I had been shouting in my fever deliriously for someone called 'Sati'!

The mention of the word brought the terrifying events of that night back to mind. Had I been feverish even then, and imagined it all? Or had I really seen the old man's dead daughter?

Days, weeks and then years passed. I continued to travel in Rajasthan with Pa whenever I could, but I never ever stopped near any wayside memorial. I didn't think of the girl's face often, but when I did, I always knew, that for me, the story had not ended that night of the new moon. And I was right.

Two years ago, when I was 23, that same face, the same upraised arm, the same tormented eyes, the same billowing, black hair, leapt into my line of vision when I was boating in solitude on Sukhna Lake. I recoiled in horror.

wondering why she had come to haunt me here in Chandigarh. Then, with the breeze, came a plaintive cry for help.

"This time it's real," I told myself. "This time I am old enough to find out whether she's real and whether she's in trouble." I dived into the water and struck out towards the floundering girl. When I reached her, I was prepared to extend my arm and touch nothing, but to my surprise, a struggling, coughing, panicking girl was actually before me.

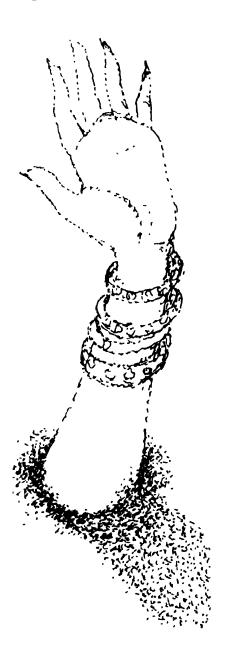
She clutched my neck and dragged me down with her. For a moment I thought once again of the old man's words, "You are the chosen one"; and I wished that I could give myself up to the darkness that pulled me down. But I could not. I fought back to the surface, fought back to the boat, fought back to reality.

What else is there to say? Tomorrow morning, I go back to my father's house with my chosen wife. Sati. Her name is Sati. Was it she or was it I or was it some Greater One who did the choosing?

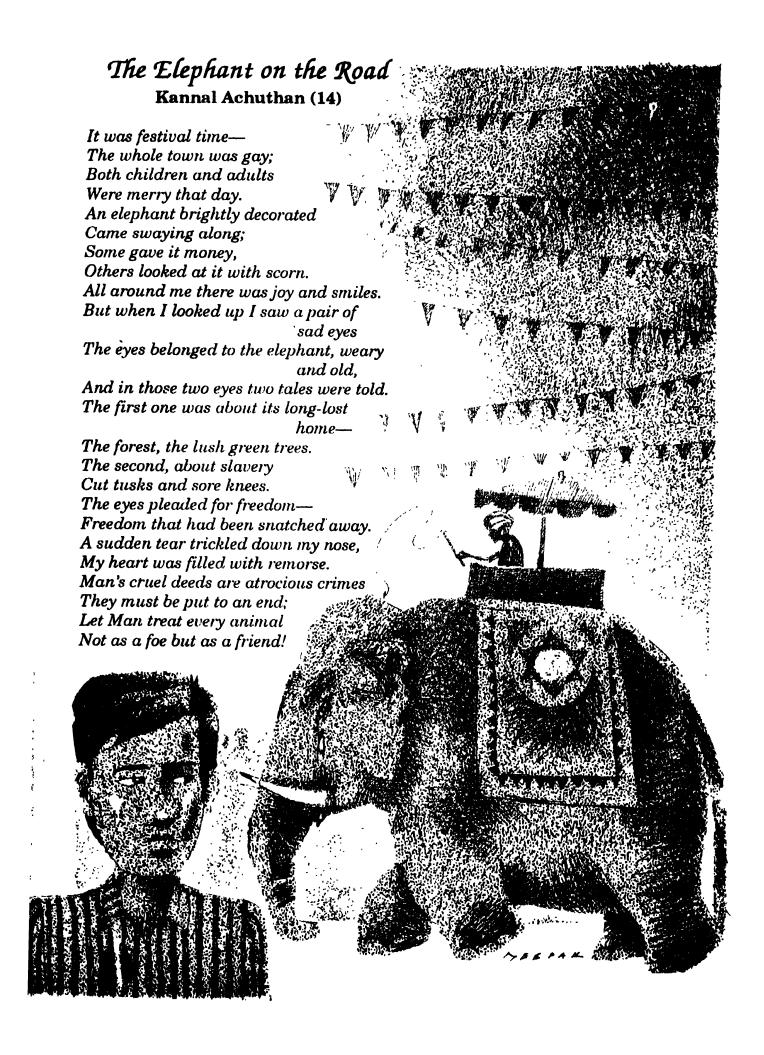
And I do not try to explain why her face

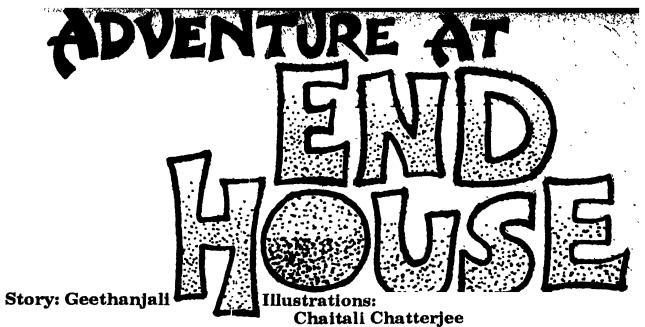
haunted me for years. She had shown me the future when I was too young to know what to do. But when the time came, I recognised her pain and she recognised my love. We knew each other as soul mates.

We will be right together.



I do not know.





Where is Shiela?

Part IV

Four friends, Manisha, Sheetal, Vivek and Siddharth, enjoy the company of Miss Daisy, the new occupant of End House. Snapper, Miss Daisy's dog, is very difficult and unmanageable. Anita, Miss Daisy's cousin, reaches Madras to meet her sister, Marie, who is expected to come to End House to collect her mother's jewellery. Miss Daisy's house is broken into. Suspicion falls on Shiela, Anita's twin, who has tried to steal the jewellery earlier too.

RMED with a photograph of the like-as-pea twins, Anita and Shiela, the children set out hunting for Shiela. The first hotel they visited was the one nearest Gandhi Lane. It was a posh hotel and the receptionist smiled enquiringly at them as they entered.

"Has a Miss Shiela Richards checked in?" Vivék asked tentatively.

The receptionist looked up the register and shook her head, "I'm afraid not."

Manisha produced the photograph of the twins, "She looks like this."
Maybe she is using some other name.

The receptionist glanced at the photograph. "No, she is not here. Why don't you try Ajanta hotel or Shringar?"

The children trudged on to the other three hotels but each time they drew a blank. "We were wrong after all," Sheetal said mournfully. "I'm sure she is not staying in this neighbourhood at all."

"She must be somewhere here," Manisha insisted. "Otherwise how did she know of the right time to break into End House?"

"Yes," Vivek agreed.
"But we forgot something. Perhaps she is staying in a friend's house. We will never find her then. We can't possibly go knocking from door to door saying, 'Excuse me, is Shiela Richards staying here?' "

The green bus rumbled into the bus stop and the four children got inside. They were so busy talking that they failed to notice the slim, fair lady who got in behind them. It was Sheetal who noticed her just as they were getting down. The tall lady also got off at their stop.

"Anita!" Sheetal called out.

Vivek, Manisha and Siddharth looked at the lady who walked on as though she had not heard. "She did not even look at me," Sheetal complained, her mouth drooping at the corners.

Vivek stared after the departing lady. "Hey!" he said excitedly, "I think that lady is not Anita at all. Surely Anita would have stopped to speak to us. Do you know what I think?..."

"Yes," Siddharth breathed, "that must be the other twin, Shiela. Let us trail her. She will probably lead us to where she is staying."

"Gosh, what a lucky coincidence!" Manisha said excitedly. The others nodded. They followed the tall lady at a respectable distance.

"Don't let her suspect that we are trailing her."

Vivek whispered. "Let us keep on talking." So they walked along talking and laughing but keeping their eye on the tall lady. Then suddenly the lady clapped her hands and stopped a passing autorickshaw. She got in and, much to the dismay of the watching children, the autorickshaw took off. Vivek looked around to see if another autorickshaw was in sight but there was no sign of one.

"That's it. We have lost her, I am afraid. What a pity! We were so close," Vivek said in a disappointed tone. They walked back home, deeply disappointed.

"Well," Siddharth said finally "at least we know now that she really is in this neighbourhood. I wonder what Anita will say when we tell her that we saw her twin sister. They are alike, aren't they?"

The children reached Gandhi Lane to find a big crowd had collected outside End House. Manisha's grandmother was there rap-rapping her stick. Vivek's and Sheetal's mothers were also there. Aunt Maya stood wearing a smug look that told the children that Snapper had been upto mischief. Miss Daisv was looking red and harrassed. Dr. Ray was looking thunderous and Mr. Mahadev was shouting at the top of his voice, "I've had enough. That dog



should be given to the dog van."

"What has Snapper done now?" Vivek asked his mother.

His mother replied in a faint voice, "He pounced on a tiny ginger kitten. He would have killed it if Mr. Mahadev had not come in time to save it."

Sheetal burst into tears when she saw the ginger kitten. Manisha went over to the kitten, "Oh, the poor little thing is hurt. Grandmother, may I take him inside?" Grandmother nodded. She and Sheetal followed Manisha inside the house.

As they were coaxing the kitten to drink some milk, Siddharth came in, "Dr. Ray is mad with rage and Mr. Mahadev insists that Snapper be sent away. Aunt Daisy refused to hear of any such thing, Finally, my mother suggested that Snapper should be given one final chance. He is to be kept chained and if he is found running loose and causing harm, he will be handed over to the dog van."

"Poor Aunt Daisy must be upset. Let's go and comfort her," Sheetal suggested.

Manisha placed the ginger kitten in a basket where he curled up. "We will be back soon, Ginger." Sleep well," she said running after Sheetal and Siddharth. They found Vivek at End House, helping Miss Daisy to chain Snapper. Snapper looked startled and indignant when he saw the chain.

"Don't misbehave, Snapper. Do you want to be taken away from Aunt Daisy?" Sheetal demanded after Snapper was securely chained up in the veranda. Snapper gave a snarl and turned his back on the children.

"I have never seen such an angry dog in my life..." Siddharth began and stopped hastily when he saw the gleam in Miss Daisy's eyes.

"Aunt Daisy," Manisha said suddenly, "we saw



your cousin Shiela this morning. She is staying somewhere here as we guessed."

"What! Is she staying in one of the hotels, as you said?" Miss Daisy asked in surprise.

"No, she isn't. We met her in the bus coming home. We did not notice her in the bus but we saw her getting off at our stop. We thought she was Anita, but when she did not recognise us, we realised she was the other twin."

"Hmm..." Miss Daisy said thoughtfully, "So Shiela is here. Just wait till Anita hears about this. She has gone out visiting her friends. Oh dear, I only wish that Marie would hurry up and come. I shall feel at ease only when I have handed over the jewels to her. They are worth a small fortune."

The next morning, Vivek and Siddharth were having breakfast when Manisha burst in excitedly. "Hullo, Manisha, you are early today. Care to have some dosas?" Vivek's mother greeted her.

"No, thank you, Aunty. I have just had my breakfast. I shall wait till they have finished," Manisha said and waited impatiently till the boys

finished their breakfast.

"What is the matter? Do you have some news?" Vivek asked. "Did you see Shiela again? You seem to be bursting with news."

"No, but my grandmother said this morning that Mrs. Mahadev has taken a paying guest. Care to guess as to who the paying guest will be?" Manisha asked.

"Shiela!" the boys said in one voice. Siddharth continued excitedly, "It must be Shiela. How will we find out?"

"I thought about it while you were having breakfast and I have an idea," Manisha said. "At school they gave us sponsor cards. We are supposed to collect money to build a Home for the Aged. Sheetal and I will take our cards and go to Mr. Mahadev for his contribution. I dare say we will bump into the paying guest once we get inside his house."

"Good idea! You girls can go this evening after school. We had better hurry up now. It is already eight o'clock," Vivek said looking at his watch.

"Right. I shall tell Sheetal about our plan on our way to school," Manisha said, as she sped off. That evening the girls took their Home-for-the-Aged cards and went to Mr. Mahadev's house. Manisha gingerly pressed the bell and Sheetal found herself hoping that-the cranky Mrs. Mahadev would not answer the door. Much to their relief it was Mr. Mahadev who answered.

"Well, well, and what brings you here?" he asked cheerfully.

"Uncle," Sheetal said holding out her card, "we are collecting some money from everyone to build a Home for the Aged. Our class teacher gave us these cards. Will you please contribute something?"

"Sure, come in,"
Mr. Mahadev led them
into the drawing room and
went to get the money.
The girls looked round the
room. The house was
neatly furnished. Steps
led from the front room to
rooms upstairs.

"I suppose the paying guest has her room upstairs," Manisha whispered to Sheetal.

Sheetal stared almost as if she expected the paying guest to put in an appearance.

Mr. Mahadev came back with his generous contribution. "There you are, girls." "Uncle," Manisha said hesitantly, "we heard you have a paying guest. Do you think she would like to contribute?"

"I am afraid you will have to ask her that. I think she won't refuse. She is a nice, young lady."

"Can we meet her now?" Sheetal asked quickly.

Her heart sank as Mr. Mahadev shook his head, "I'm afraid not. She has gone out. Come again later this evening if you want to."

The girls rose to their feet. "Thank you very much, Uncle..." Manisha began and stopped short. She stared at Sheetal in dismay. They could hear Snapper barking. As they ran out, they saw his black form charging down the lane.

Mr. Mahadev swore under his breath, "That dog is running free again. If he does anything awful this time, I shall call the dog van."

The girls ran out calling out to Snapper at the top of their voices. The boys came running out of their house on hearing the voices of the girls.

"Snapper is loose. Run after him, Vivek," Sheetal shouted.

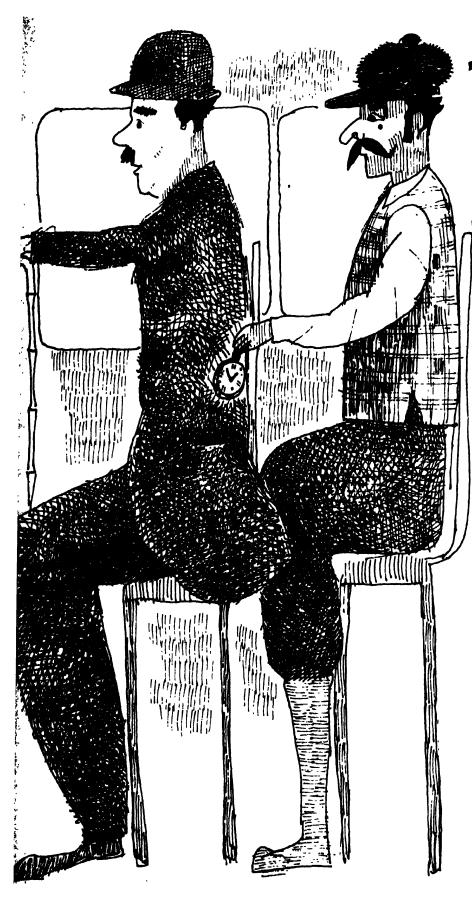
Vivek looked around but there was no sign of Snapper. "Where on earth is he? Spread out and search. We must find him before he gets upto mischief!"

To be continued

Answers to Crossquiz

(See page 32)

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HE ACTOR ACTOR AND THE PICKPOCKET Text: Sukhendu Dutta

Text: Sukhendu Dutta Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

New York City.

The veteran actor was returning to his hotel at the end of the day. He was an actor, director and film-maker of indisputable talent, who consistently produced good films on the joys and sorrows of the common people. Farmers, shopkeepers, craftsmen, blacksmiths, workers of all kinds, as well as gentlemen of leisure were the characters of his films. This endeared him to all—the rich, the middle class and the poor.

Actors generally shun public contact. But this celebrated actor was a different type of man.



He often travelled by bus along with the common people. As it was on that day.

Back in the hotel room, while unbuttoning his coat, he felt a small object in its pocket. Imagine his surprise when he found a gold pocket-watch inside.

The actor could hardly believe his eyes. He was so surprised that it was some time before he could react. "This is not my watch!" he mumbled to himself and stared at the gold watch. His eyes grew wider and wider. 'How has it come to be in my pocket?' he wondered.

The actor retired for the night with a troubled mind. The next day he received a letter. It said:

Dear Sir,

I regret to state that I am a pickpocket, and make my living by picking other people's pockets.

My joy knew no bounds when I saw you, my beloved actor, travelling by a bus yesterday. I adore you, Sir! I admire you greatly! But how could I express my love and respect to my dear actor? So I reached into the pocket of a gentleman's

coat and took his gold watch out of it. I seldom make such a picking. We prefer to steal from the pockets of those whose purses are full of bank notes. I put the pocketwatch carefully inside your coat pocket. Please accept it as a gift of love and esteem to you from a poor pickpocket.

With high regards...
So the mystery of the gold watch was solved!

But what a shameful excuse to pick a man's pocket! The actor knitted his eyebrows.
To show respect to him?

'N-n-no!' he sadly shook his head. 'No self-respecting person would accept such a gift.' So the next day, he went to the police and explained to them how the pocket-watch got into his pocket. He was a man of principles and deplored the tactics used to show respect to him. Would the police trace the owner of the gold watch and return it to him?

The police, in spite of their best efforts, failed to find the owner of the watch. So they returned it to the actor after a few days.

The veteran actor was a legend in his lifetime. Newspapers were delighted to report such a juicy event to their readers. They made a big story with big headlines. The next day, all the leading newspapers of New York reported it on their front pages. By morning, the entire city knew about the gold watch, causing



considerable embarrassment to the actor.

But a bigger embarrassment awaited him. The next day the postman brought a letter and a small post parcel for him. The letter read:

Dear Sir,

The gold watch belonged to me! I lost it a few days back while travelling by bus. Now I know how it was lost.

I am happy to know that the pickpocket has gifted it away to you as a token of his love and respect for you.

I learn that you want to return the watch to its owner. But I do not want my watch back. How can I take back a gift?

I love and regard you with utmost respect.
Among your countless admirers, there are none more devoted to you than I. I want to impress upon you that my love

and admiration for you is no less than that of the pickpocket's. And I want to establish that.

How will you use the pocket-watch without its chain? It is with unfathomable love, ineffable joy and without any regret that I present the gold chain of my pocket-watch to you as my gift. It is being sent to you in a separate post parcel. I would be happier if you will kindly accept it.

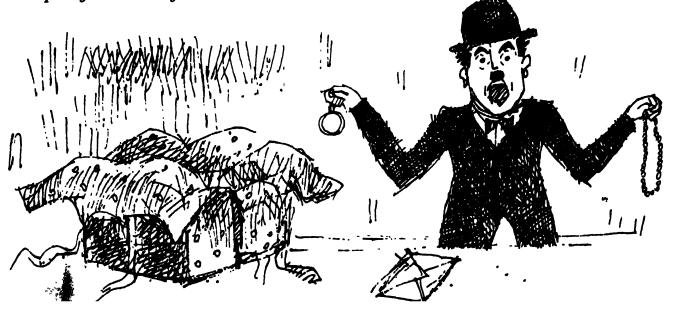
With high regards...

With an amused smile, the actor tore open the wrapping of the post parcel. He pulled out the gold chain and looked at it. It was indeed a gold chain that fitted the pocket-watch!

This turn of events left the actor speechless. Through his roles, he would bring spontaneous smiles on the faces of his audience with his unique acting talent. Now he himself smiled till it broadened into a laugh!

This is a true story. Born in a poor family, the celebrated actor became the darling of the masses. He was an incredibly creative man and made some of the best films that ever came out of Hollywood. Pictures like *Modern* Times, The Great Dictator. The Kid and many others made by him bear testimony to his talent. He won the love and respect of his audiences and left them spellbound.

This incident happened many years ago. April 16 marks the actor's birthday. And this is a tribute to the unrivalled actor, director and film-maker, the late Charlie Chaplin!





Dear pips and pops,

"That's it," shouted
Raghu, flinging himself on
my bed and upsetting my
poor, blameless pillow
which prefers to lead a
quiet life, "that's it. I have
waited long enough, much
too long in fact. I shall
take my talents
elsewhere."

Raghu had been pacing the floor like a feverish tiger for about an hour, and what he was waiting for was a reply from the Editor about the poems he had sent—his terrible, unpoetic poems. But since he had sent the poems only about an hour and fifteen minutes ago, I didn't quite see how he could expect a reply that immediately.

"Editors," I explained patiently, "are busy people. They have to subedit and para-edit and line-edit and resident-edit and..."

"What's resident-edit?" he barked. "I think you are just making it up."

"Of course not," I said even more patiently, like I would with a six-year-old. "Resident-editis editing at home. I told you editors are very, very, very busy people. I remember once..."

"I don't care," he yelled.
"I've waited long enough,
for one whole hour. I shall
now take my talents
elsewhere."

He flung himself out of my room, and he and his talents slammed the door shut. But I was glad. Secretly glad. Because you know the Editor is actually my friend and...

"The Editor may be your friend," shouted Raghu, pushing his face in through my window, "but how sad your Editor friend will be when my name appears in golden letters in all the newspa-

pers."

"What golden letters?" I asked crossly. "Newspapers don't use colour..."

"Ha! You haven't seen the Saturday and Sunday editions, have you? And what about magazines? In golden letters. My name. And then your Editor will be jolly sorry. Because I took my talents elsewhere."

"Shut up about this elsewhere," I said. "What elsewhere? Which elsewhere? I don't believe you have an elsewhere."

"Oh yeah? You just wait and see," he laughed horribly and disappeared. Back he came after a moment and cackled, "You will be sorry too."

Sorry? Sorry about



what? I had my literary career, I was already wellknown. Soon, I could get nominated for the Nobel...

A scream tore the air. It seemed to come from the garden. It was followed by a couple of more screams, a huge thud and then a crash. I rushed out. So did my mother, Raghu's mother and about half the neighbourhood.

"What is it? What has happened?" we asked each other. But we couldn't even hear our own voices, because the noise from the garden had risen another twenty decibels. And along with the screams, the thuds and the crashes, was a new sound, a kind of wail, like a huge balloon being tortured.

"When shall I see you again?" the wail asked.
"When shall I see you again.
"Minus the ache and the pain?
"When shall I see you

again With profit and with gain?"

And then there were more crashes and another hideous wail repeated the last two words "with gain" about fifteen times, rising higher and higher till at the sixteenth repetition, the moon swallowed humedly and left the

skies not to be seen again till late evening.

"Raghu!" yelled his mother.

"Raghu!" yelled mine.
"Raghu!" yelled all the neighbours.

But he couldn't hear us. Nor could my brother who was at the drums—not exactly drums—they were large steel pans he was beating with huge, steel ladles. The noise was incredible.

"When shall I see you again?" wailed Raghu, after he had taken a long breath.

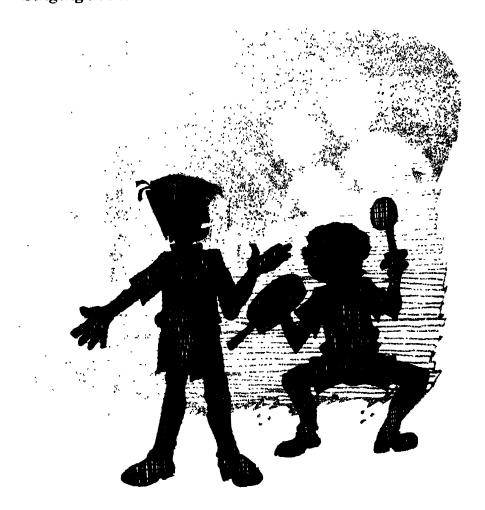
"When shall I see you again.
Singing in the rain?

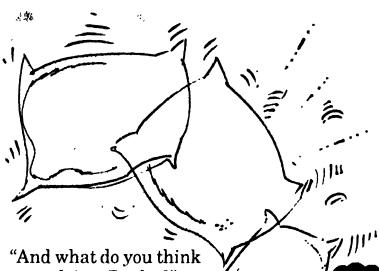
When shall I see you again With intestines and brain?"

And this time, he repeated "with brain" fifteen times, going higher and higher till...

Raghu's mother strode up and clapped her hand over his mouth. "Stop it," she yelled, "and you too," she said to my brother who was about to bring down the ladles on the pans with great vigour.

My mother hurriedly went up and snatched the ladles from him. "Stop it!" she yelled. "How dare you take my things away from the kitchen?"





"And what do you think you are doing, Raghu?" shouted his mother.

"Hummphx!" said Raghu from behind her hand.

"Practising? Practising what pray?"

"Amx!" said Raghu.

"Music, is it? You call this music, do you?" And she took her hand away from his mouth, clamped it on his ear and led him away.

"Nobody understands my genius," muttered Raghu, punching my poor, blameless pillow. "My genius. My talents. They are dying like flowers in a desert, like chalk in a teacher's hand, like air in my bicycle tyre, like water in a railway canteen, like..."

I ran. I took one look at my poor, blameless pillow, said a silent farewell and ran. Out of my room and into the kitchen, the warm, happy, brotherless kitchen where I knew Raghu couldn't bring his atrocious thoughts.

Fortunately my pillow is quite deaf.

Yours deafened-by-rhyme Perky How does Dracula keep fit?
He plays batminton

Ramu: Our school is haunted!

Shamu: Really?
Ramu: Yes, the
headmaster's always
talking about the school

spirit.

What was written on the bionic monster's gravestone?

Rust in peace.'

What do short-sighted phantoms wear?

On what day of the week do monsters eat people?

Chewsdays.

The children of
India came into
special focus in the
month of February in
the Capital. In two
separate events, one a
seminar and the other
an exhibition of
paintings, adults
sought to understand
and provide for the
needs, both mental
and physical, of the
child.

Bharat Sankalp, an organisation set up to further Indian values, heritage and culture, held a seminar on 'Indianness in Indian Literature' in New Delhi on February 11 and 12. The second day's proceedings were devoted to children's literature.

The speakers, while finding it difficult to define 'Indianness', emphasised that most stories in one part of the country would find a parallel in another, only the names of the characters would vary. Even otherwise bound as we are by a common culture and

set of traditions, it would not be difficult to identify with a story specific to a part of the country different from one's own.

An overview of the present scenario of children's literature was given and the increasing number of books for children by Indian authors set against an Indian background was noted and lauded.

*

Founded 15 years ago by the late Rippan Kapur, Child Relief and You (CRY) is a well-known organisation working to alleviate the lot of underprivileged children.

With the help of a sponsor, CRY put up 'Art for CRY', an exhibition and sale of the works of 50 of India's foremost artists on the theme 'The Child and its Universe'. The list of eminent artists

included Anjolie Ela Menon, Arpana Caur, Krishen Khanna, Bulbul Sharma, and Badri Narayan. Some children's paintings and drawings were also put up alongside the greats.

Through 'Art for CRY', held at Delhi's Lalit Kala Akademi from February 17 to 23, the organisation sought "to generate public awareness on the situation of deprived children" and "give a large number of people an opportunity to participate" in such an effort.

What do you understand by 'Indianness'?

Send your viewpoints to Editor, Children's World, Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi 110002.



OLI is all colour and fun. It is our merriest Spring festival. But it is not the end of Spring gaiety. The festive spirit carries on, long into April.

Our Spring begins while it is a bit cold.
Often, before it is midway, the days get warm and then quite hot. April may be hot, but it is Spring yet.

Some of our trees leaf and flower in February, and some in March. The gulmohur blooms in mid-April, and the amaltas towards the end of the month.

Remember, Delhi is our base for this series. In the south, right up to Kanyakumari, Spring comes earlier. In Himachal and Kashmir, early April is cold yet. But the almond and other trees are in bloom and,

therefore, in full glory in the Spring.

In ancient Rome, in the last days of April and the first days of May, a festival—Floralia—was held in honour of Flora, the goddess of Spring and flowers.

April, some say, comes from the Latin word aperio. It means 'I open'. This refers to the opening of flowers. You can extend it to mean the beginning of a new cycle in nature.

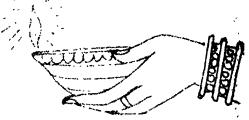
Naba Barsha, the
Bengali New Year, begins
on or around March 21—
the Spring equinox. But it
is celebrated in mid-April.
Vishu, the New Year of
Keralites, is also celebrated around that time. So
are the festivals of Bihu in
Assam and Baisakhi in
Punjab.

As a festive month, April has a jolly start. Its first day is All Fools' Day.

On April 1, everybody tries to play a joke or a prank on others. At one time, a simple boy or girl was sent to a bookshop to buy a copy of 'History of Eve's Grandmother' or to a chemist's for 'a bottle of pigeon's milk'! Now, prank calls to the fire brigade and bomb hoaxes are part of the modern idea of April 'fooling'. This is very irritating. But on just this one day, everybody puts up with it. Even the teachers laugh when fooled by their pupils.

The practice is very old. Nobody knows for certain when or how it all began. As an old verse says:

The first of April, some do say,



Is set apart for All
Fools' Day,
But why the people call
it so,

Nor I, nor they themselves, do know.

The Feast of Fools was celebrated in the Middle Ages. So it is quite likely that a Fools' Day was in existence before the Middle Ages too.

Rama's name conjures up the autumn festivals of Dussehra and Diwali. But there is a Rama festival in Spring too. It is Rama Navami.

Navami means ninth.
Rama Navami is the
ninth day of the Indian
month of Chait or Chaitra.
The day is celebrated as
Rama's birthday.

Rama is worshipped both as a god and a hero. He was an ideal king. His rule, *Rama rajya*, is considered to have been a golden age.

During the eight days before *Navami*, people pray to Rama. They read or listen to his story. On the festival day they visit temples.

The temples are decorated. Special singing or reciting of the *Ramayana* is arranged. Rama's story is presented in dance form. Outside each temple there is a sort of *mela*.

By the way, Chaitra is called madhumas. As the



trees and plants are in bloom, bees visit them for honey.

Another important day in April is *Mahavir Jayanti*. It is a festival of the Jains. Mahavir was born in a royal family. But, for the good of humanity, he chose to teach or preach rather than rule as a king.

The Jains celebrate the day in a quiet way. They pray and go to the temples.

...A drum is beating somewhere. There is the sound of dancing too. It is from the *mela* ground. Baisakhi is being celebrated there.

Baisakhi is a gay festival of Punjab and the nearby areas, and celebrates the beginning of their New Year. It always falls on April 13. Its timing is significant.

The wheat crop is ready. The farmers and

others look happy.

Baisakhi is a sort of holiday before weeks of hard work of gathering and storing or selling of the grain.

All roads lead to the fair. Men wear bright turbans and women shimmering dupattas. Glass bangles glint and clink on their wrists.

The *mela* is a merry medley. There are stalls,



swings, merry-go-rounds and seesaws. Many entertainers are also there. So are *Bhangra* groups that dance to the beating of thunderous drums.

For the Sikhs, the day has added importance. It was on *Baisakhi* day that Guru Gobind Singh formed Khalsa, which means 'the pure'. The Khalsas are therefore the ranks of pure followers of the faith.

Gurudwaras are decorated on the day. A complete reading of the Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, goes on. Free kitchens are arranged. Rich and poor then eat together.

Punjab is in the north of India. In the east, Assam too has a gay festival. It is Rongali Bihu. Magh or Bhogali Bihu is celebrated in January.

Rongali Bihu has all the colour and fervour of Spring. There is feasting and dancing on the day. It is also a day of betrothals. Girls weave lovely scarves for their lovers. The boys offer orchids to the girls.

Many tribals, living close to nature, welcome the Spring in their own festive ways.

In the gardens, most of the March flowers are gone. Now lilies and sunflowers are in bloom. And most of the shrubs look glorious.

One of these is the bougainvillaea. It spreads splashes of colour around. They range from white to purple and crimson.

Delhi honours the shrub by holding a bougainvillaea festival. So do some Haryana Tourism centres.

In Spring, with fresh leaves and flowers and the birds and animals looking lively, life seems to have renewed itself. And when there is new life, there is new hope. This is the message of Easter.

Jesus was a poor man. But He loved His fellow men. And He taught others to love and help everybody. Those who followed Him said that He was the son of God.

This made many others His enemies. In those days the land where Jesus lived was under the Romans. His enemies betrayed Jesus to the Romans.

The Romans treated Jesus like a criminal. And like a criminal they nailed Him to a cross. The day was Friday. So the day of His crucifixion, or death, is called Good Friday.

On this day, the Christians do not eat meat or fish. They go to the Church and pray.

However, children eat special buns—hot cross buns—on this day. A cross is made on each bun before baking. It reminds them of the story of Jesus Christ.

Jesus was buried by His friends. But when, three days later, some women went to the grave, the body was not there.

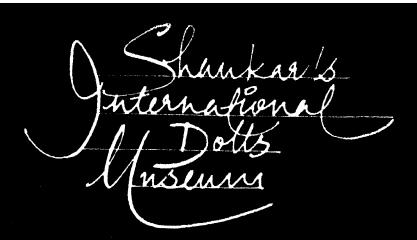
Soon they saw a man coming towards them. He said He was Jesus. He had come back to life. He told the women and the others present there to teach everybody to love all.

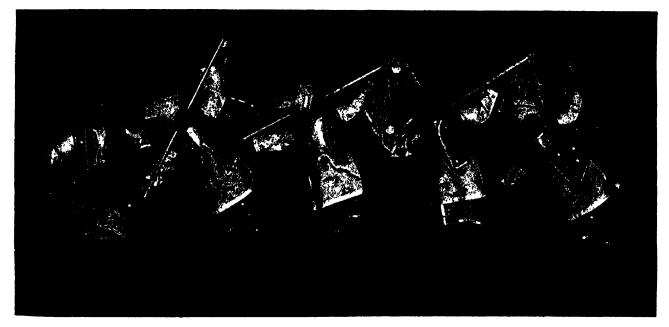
This is what is called Resurrection—coming back to life. And the day is named Easter.

The word comes from Eastre. This is the name of an Anglo-Saxon goddess. The Spring festival was once held in her honour. Now the people, who had become Christians, celebrated Easter around that time.

You must have heard of Easter eggs. They are eggs painted red or with bright pictures. Or they are chocolate eggs. Both the old and young enjoy Easter eggs.

The egg is also a symbol of Spring. For, from it comes new life. And with new life come new joy and hope.



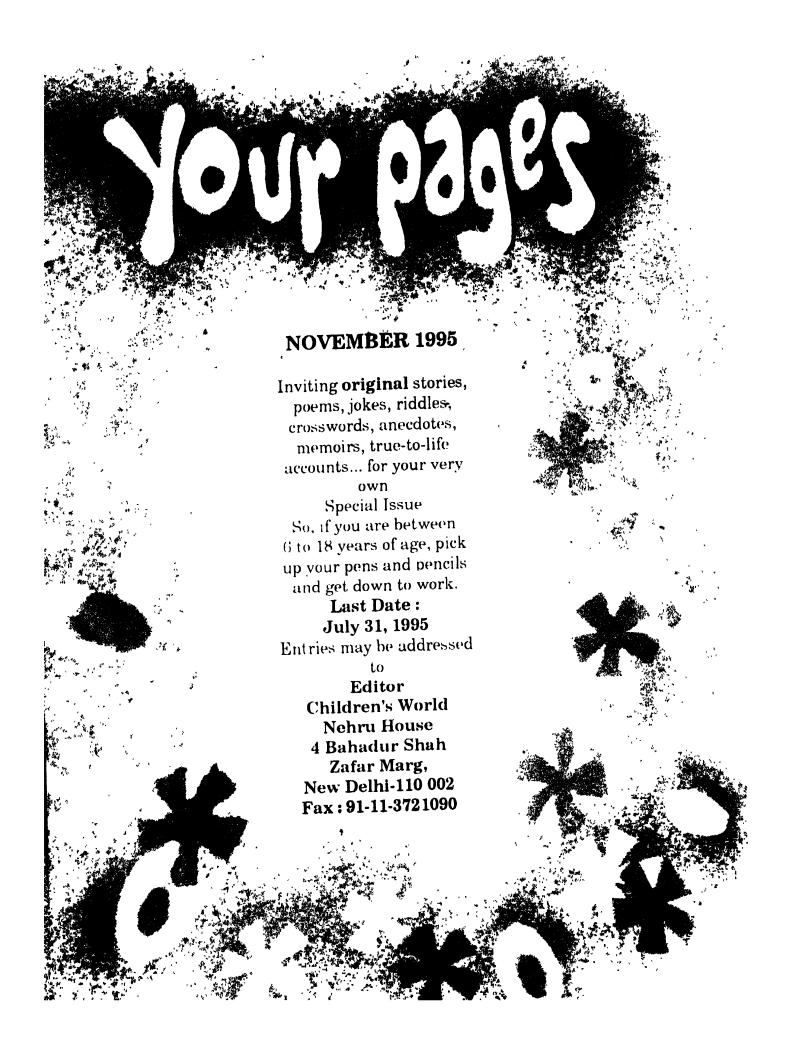


'Bhangra' dancers from Punjab

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Circulation & Advertisements C.P. Ravindran

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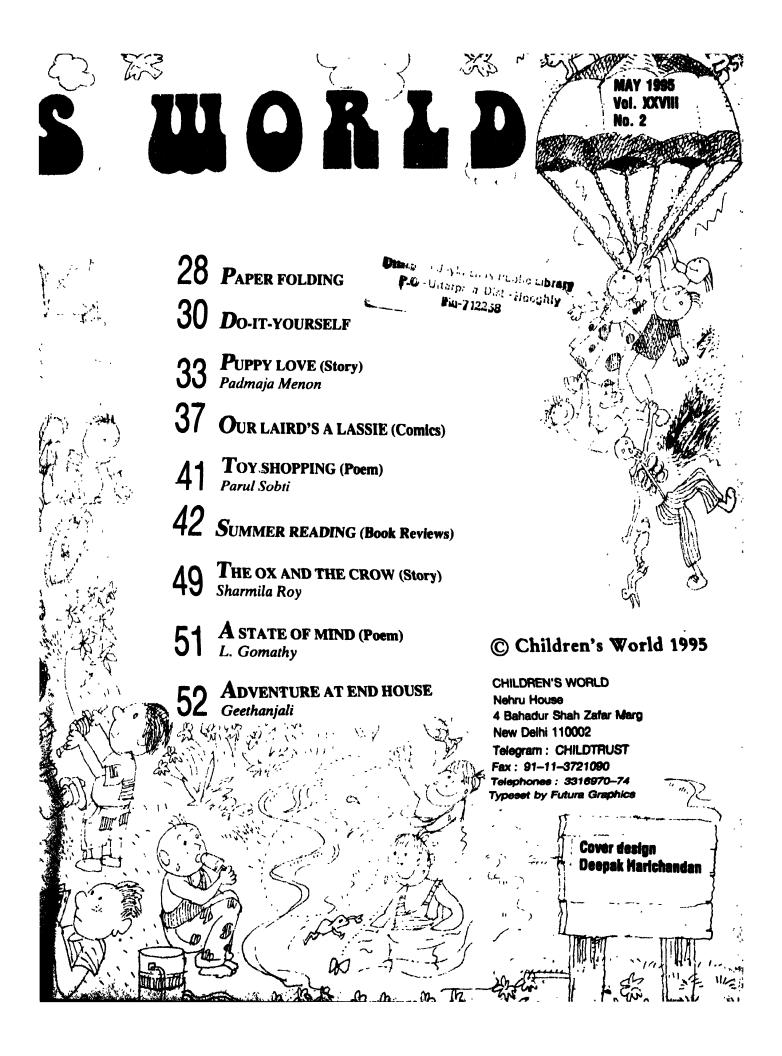
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Derson Marketers

THANK YOU, DEAR MR. GOD

I am so happy, I have come to this Beautiful wonderful world. I know not As days pass by,

... Der in mit er in elever in

It's summer time folks! Unmistakably summer! And if you feel that rushing off on a holiday, being in crowded places, indulging oneself, or going on long, laborious treks, that is, doing the predictable things expected of a summer holiday are boring, then it is time you did something different this summer. Sit back and discover the nooks and crannies of your own home. As it is, the year just whizzes past, what with rushing to school—through exams, activities and festivities. For heaven's sake, when does one get to know one's own dwelling?

The May issue of Children's World may provide some pointers. **For starters, try** atering your garden (or I love it More and more.

I entered this world A humble learner. And one fine day I shall bid goodbye A humble learner Perhaps, learning is life

Whether there is life

flower pots) with the pathetic trickle that sluggishly emerges from the hose. The hiss of the parched soil sucking in the drops noisily can be the most gratifying sound you may have ever heard. Wash the dusty leaves and when their sparkle leaves you ecstatic, venture into the kitchen to slake your own thirst, with some imaginative summer coolers.

'Mums' could be greeted with a tall glass of Carpine Cocktail or Daredevil Delight on their own special day! Mothers Day comes off on the second Sunday of May every year (May 14 this year). After all it's the 'presence and absence' of our mothers that decides the quality of our lives.

Not long after holiday homework begins to clamp its tentacles of

After death!!! And if there be one... I would love to enter it Again and again. Oh, thank you, Mr.God For providing me a place On this planet, that is Home for humanity...

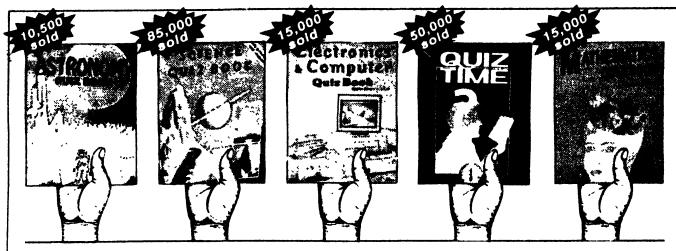
Erach Sauna, Pune

boredom on you—just doit- yourself! That's right, try some paper folding to make the most delightful of objects. The bookmark, for instance, on the the third cover of this issue, will send you scurrying for books to read. Put the bookmark to good use. The scores of books reviewed in Summer Reading are guaranteed to send you on a treasure hunt for them... And then, with your head full of ideas and the creative juices flowing, how can you not get down to writing your poem or story or article for the November 'Your Pages' special issue of Children's World?

Really... whoever said summer holidays are lazy days? It's a busy time ahead.

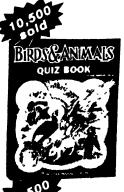
Happy simmer... Oops, summering...

Editor

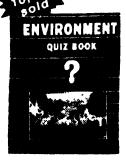


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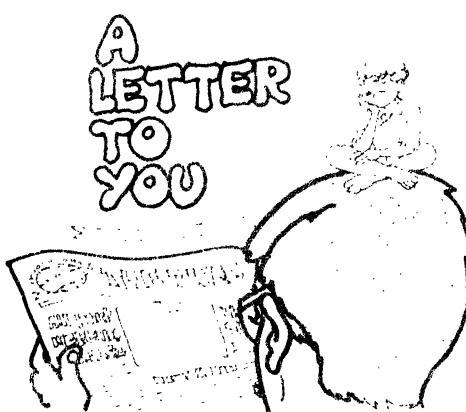


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Dear yesses and noes,

What I like about my mother is that she says, 'No!' That sounds funny. I mean I don't like her saying 'No'. Of course not. I mean who would? Especially when she says 'No' to my asking, "Can I have some more halwa and finish it off?" or "Can I go and play and do my homework later?" But the thing is, she says 'No' and that's that. I mean I don't have to think any more about what she has said. *No' is an easy word to understand, especially **when** it is said clearly, and a great many

But with my father, it's different. He doesn't say 'No'. If I ask him, "May I go to the park and play and do my homework later?" he first pretends he is deaf. He goes on reading the paper. Then after I repeat the question, more loudly, he looks up and says, "Oh, it's you", and goes back to the paper. Now, I can't see who else it can be but me. I mean who else would ask him that question except me? Not the yegetable man or the postman or the maid, isn't it? Not even my brother. because my brother never asks, he merely goes ahead and does it.

So then I have to ask my question a third time and perhaps cough a bit or bounce my cricket ball or something. Then he looks at me sideways and asks, "It's still you? What do you want this time?"

The trouble is you can't gnash your teeth at your father, so you swallow your teeth and say, fourthly, sweetly, "Can I go and play now and do my homework later?"

"Oh. Go and ask your mother."

"She's not at home."

This time, the newspaper is actually put down and the man's entire face can be seen. "Not at home, is it?" the face asks.

"She's not at home," I confirm.

"And you want to go and play instead of doing your homework?"

"Actually, I will do my homework, but later."

"And you want my permission?"

I nod having given up on words altogether.

"Sure," he says breezily.
"Sure, go and play or
whatever...."

My face jumps with delight and I charge up to the door when his voice stops me...

"You can go and play or whatever," he says, "when the sun rises in the west

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and peacocks dance in the sun."

"But..." I exclaim, "the sun rises in the east and peacocks dance in the rain."

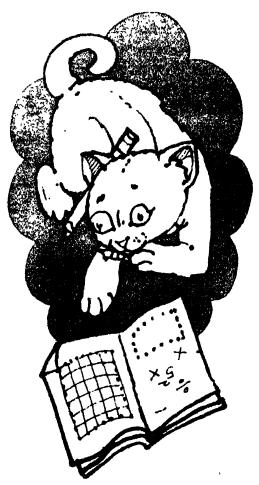
"Exactly," says my father and goes back to his newspaper.

"So does this mean I can go or I can't?"

But he's deep in the affairs of the world and has gone deaf again.

When I talked to Raghu about it, he told me that in their house, it was his father who said 'No'.

"Sometimes, he says 'No' even before I've





started my question,"
complained Raghu. "But
my mother is the funny
one. She never says 'No',
but she says other strange
things instead."

"Like what?" I asked.

"Well, like 'You can do whatever you want when the seas turn yellow', or sometimes she says, 'You can do just what you want when Perky's cat learns arithmetic'. That's what she says."

"My cat learn arithmetic? Lini?"

Raghu nodded. And suddenly, his eyes lit up with the power of a thousand candles. "Listen, Perky," he said. "Let's do it!"

"Do what?" I asked.

"Teach Lini arithmetic! Then when my mother says, 'Not until Lini knows arithmetic,' I can show her. Come on, we don't have a minute to waste. And oh, bring your book of multiplication tables."

Can the sun rise in the west? Can peacocks dance in the sun? Can seas turn yellow? Any of these things might, just possibly might happen. But Lini learn arithmetic? Tcchah!

But you think Raghu will ever listen? Wait and see what happened. To Lini, to me and to arithmetic.

Yours negatively, Perky





Suria

cannot find my purse!" wailed Mummy, as she frantically rummaged through the pile of clothes on the bed. "Vineet, help me find it! I have to pay the sabziwallah and he's getting wild, waiting."

"I'm sure to get late for school." muttered Vineet. as he joined Mummy in her search.

"The toast!" came Daddy's scream from the kitchen. "I went in for some hot water for my shave and found the toaster smoking."

"I had forgotten about it." said Mummy miserably. "I'm so absent-minded," she added.

"May I know what this object is doing on the tray on my bedside table?" asked Dadu (grandfather) from the threshold of his room. "And where is my bed-tea?"

From his hands dangled the purse Mummy was hunting for.

"Oh! I must have got them mixed up," said Mummy. She rushed up to her room and opened the steel almirah in the corner. Sure enough, there was a still-steaming cup of tea on its shelves, near the hooks for purses and handbags.

"After fifteen years of running a house, this is just too much," she said gloomily, "Why am I so absent-minded?"

But there was no time to wonder about this question. The subziwallah was beginning to shout. Mummy rushed to the door at the back of the kitchen. It was seven in the morning, and rush time for the household.

"Hurry up, Vineet," Daddy called, as he started towards the bus-stop.

But Vineet's tiffin-box was not in its usual place on the dining table. "Where's my tiffin-box. Mummy?" Vineet asked.

But Mummy had busied herself making a fresh cup of tea for *Dadu* before she left for her office.

Better not make her feel more troubled.' thought Vineet and looked around the kitchen. Ah, there it was, half-hidden by the newspapers on the centre-table before the sofa. Thank God he had found it in time!

On his way to the busstop. Vineet thought of Mummy and her general forgetfulness. Mummy was a dear, and must be quite brainy too, as she worked at an office, developing computer software. But she was absentminded, there was no getting away from that. Vineet remembered how

she had, only yesterday, kept the front door key in its usual place by the television set, stepped out with all of them—and pulled the door shut after her. As it had a Yale lock, the door had locked itself immediately and, instead of going to the local flower show as intended, they had to go over to the local locksmith. And that was not an isolated instance.

Every other day, there were burnt smells accompanied by, "Oh, I forgot the milk was on", or "The sabzi's burnt". Mummy was penitent after every such disaster, major or minor. "I'll never let it happen again," she always said. But the rest of the family knew better.

Vineet had heard Daddy recount how he had first met Mummy. They had been students at the same college. Daddy a couple of years senior. One day at the library, he had noticed a small crowd gather as the librarian accused a girl of trying to smuggle a book away. The girl, a fresher, was protesting indignantly, "I would have got the book issued...I would have brought it to the library counter...only I was flipping through the passa. and I somehow

forgot." She had apparently walked out calmly, engrossed in the book, before she had been caught at the main entrance where the library staff checked whether the books being taken out had all been duly issued.

Daddy had realised in a flash that it was a genuine case of absentmindedness. As a senior student, he knew the librarian well and had been able to persuade that irate old lady about the truth. The girl had been let off with a warning; and while still protesting her innocence, she had been

taken out to the canteen for a cup of coffee. "So, you see, from the very beginning, I have taken her absent-mindedness to be a part of her." Well, by now, so had the entire family. They had to!

Deep in thought, Vineet jumped onto the school bus as it arrived.

It was three in the afternoon when the bus dropped him back. It had been a tiring day at school and Vineet was ravenous. He ran all the way to the front door and pressed the bell with all his might.

Why doesn't *Dadu* open up?' he wondered after a



while. Mummy, he knew, would be away at the office, but *Dadu* would be in as usual. He pressed the bell again, but there was no response and he went over to the back. He knocked and then banged on the back door that opened into the kitchen. Nobody answered.

But Dadu must be in.
He was supposed to be in.
Why wasn't he opening
up? Was it because he
couldn't? Had he suddenly
been taken ill? Had he
had a sudden heartattack?

"I must get in and find out. Somehow, I must," said Vineet to himself. The kitchen had a French window, but it was curtained and nothing could be seen through it. What was more, it was latched from the inside and Vineet could not enter the house through it. Vineet's eyes fell on a loose brick that lay on the ground beside the gutter that ran alongside the house. Picking it up, he smashed a glass pane with it. Passing his hand through, and reaching out to the latch, he unlatched the window from inside and flung it open. Then he slithered in.

There was some rather smelly fish on the kitchen counter that had not been

there when Vineet had left. Otherwise, the house seemed just as usual. Only unduly quiet. There was no shuffling of Dadu's slippers, no clearing of his throat, no deep-seated, long drawn out cough.

"Dadu," Vineet called.
There was no answer. No, wait... Was there a groan from the next room?
Vineet rushed into it and the very next moment, a thick, hairy hand clamped down on his mouth and another pinioned him to the wall.

Vineet twisted and turned, but could not free himself. He saw with horror that *Dadu* sat right in front of him, but tied to the chair on which he sat. He was struggling to speak, but all that he was managing was a groan. For, he was gagged as well as bound.

Vineet realised at once that while they had been away, a burglar had somehow gained entry into the house and overpowered his grandfather. The man had heard Vineet smash the kitchen window-pane and had been waiting for him to come in. Now Vineet too was in his clutches.

He tried to break away, only managing to bruise himself. "I'll break your bones," growled the man, "unless you do as I tell you."

Vineet sent his legs back in a powerful drive and kicked the man on his shin.

"None of that, if you want your own good," hissed the man and tightened his grip on Vineet. "Do as I tell you. I want you to open that almirah over there." He pointed his right leg at the steel almirah in the corner. "Get me the keys."

Vineet shook his head violently. But the next moment, he got such a shove from the back that he fell back on the floor. His head hit the marble and he fell stunned. The



burglar yanked him on to his feet again and, still in his clasp, Vineet shuffled towards the television cabinet. There was a lace doily on top of the television set. Under it, was where the key of the almirah was kept as a matter of course.

"M...mm...m." Red in the face, *Dadu* was trying to say something desperately, and shrugging his shoulders in a hopeless gesture. What was it that he wanted to tell Vineet?

Vineet realised it as soon as he put his hand under the lace doily.
There was no key under it, but a rupee coin with a

leaf of *dhania* (coriander) sticking to it.

Trust Mummy! She must have bought some vegetables from a vendor and, instead of the key of the almirah, put the change—the *dhania* sticking to it—under the doily.

And perhaps put the key along with the vegetables? In the fridge?

But how was he to make the man understand? "Out with the key!" he was hissing in his ears. Vineet tried to remove the man's hands from his mouth, but could not. So he waved his hands and pointed towards the kitchen. The man must have understood dimly. For, he allowed Vineet to change his course and shuffle out of the room to the kitchen.

Reaching the kitchen, Vineet opened the fridge and pulled out the vegetable tray. Carrots, beans, tomatoes, a bunch of dhania—but no key! Vineet began to sweat. The man must be growing impatient. He was probably thinking that Vineet was deliberately not coming out with the key.

"I would have opened the almirah long back really and truly," Vineet wanted to say, "but for Mummy's absentmindedness!"

"What's taking you so long?" growled the man in his ear. "Get me the keys."

Vineet gesticulated wildly that he could not find them. "What nonsense are you trying to give me?" burst out the man and gave Vineet such a push that he lost his balance. About to fall, he lunged towards the stillopen door of the fridge and caught at the handle of the freezer compartment. The freezer door swung open. In it lay the kitchen knife, its handle sticking out of a layer of transparent ice. Vineet snatched it up, the ice cracking and scattering. He half-turned and swiped at the man.

He missed him, but the very sight of the knife seemed to strike the man with terror. He let go of Vineet, and the moment Vineet was free, he let out a shriek and took another swipe at him. Caught offbalance, the man fell down. He cringed on the floor, putting his hands up to shield himself from the knife. Vineet felt his own knees shaking badly and he sank to the floor, the knife still held high in his hands.

There was a crash. Still tied to the chair, Dadu



had meanwhile tottered up to the kitchen, and now he fell hurtling down upon the man. Together the three of them rolled on the floor, the chair making a fourth. The man growled, Dadu moaned, and Vineet let out scream after scream as he struck out at the air with his knife.

"Throw away that knife," shouted the man. "I tell you, throw it away!"

The screams must have reached outside. For, Vineet could hear thumps on the front door. Some passers-by were trying to get in. There were cries of "Open the door" and "What's going on?"

Vineet began to inch forward towards the front door. If only he could open it and let the people in! But the man lay in the way and Vineet had to keep on brandishing the knife to hold him in check.

The knife seemed to have a hypnotic effect upon the man. He began to cower and that gave Vineet an advantage. Dadu too did his bit. In a matter of minutes, they had the man flat on his back with the chair—along with Dadu on it—pinning him down to the floor, and the knife hanging just inches away from the thief's eyes.

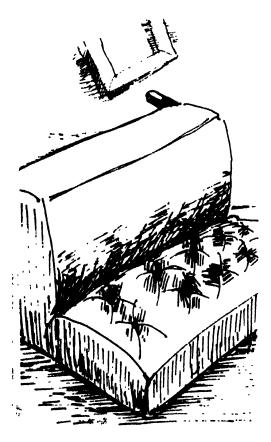
Suddenly the front door opened. It was Mummy. back from office! With the key still in the lock, she rushed in, a whole crowd behind her. The knife clattered down from Vineet's hand as he too rushed to her, and the men took over the fight. In a matter of minutes. they had overpowered the thief, untied Dadu, and rung up the police. Daddy too happened to come back from office just then, and stood gasping at the spectacle before him.

"What's all this?" he asked in bewilderment.

Dadu began to explain. "I heard the bell and unthinkingly opened it



without first peeping out through the magic eye," he said miserably. "And this man burst in and gagged me up. He wanted me to give him the keys to the steel almirah, and I would have done so immediately, only... only... I couldn't find it in the usual place. The man wouldn't believe me and said he would torture me till I yielded it up to him. I looked at all possible places I could think of, but I couldn't get it. Then the man got angry and tied me to the chair. How I wished I could make him believe I didn't know where the key was..."



"Same here," burst out Vineet. "I was scared stiff when the man asked me for the key, and I would have gladly given it up to him. But..."

They all looked at Mummy.

"I must have forgotten to keep it in its usual place," she said. "I remember now. I was locking it when the sabziwallah came, and I must have put it down somewhere and..."

"... in its place, put down the change you got back from the sabziwallah," interrupted Vineet. "But then, where did you keep the key?"

"I remember now, you had then come upstairs to collect my empty cup," said *Dadu*.

They charged into the kitchen, and sure enough, they found the key among the cups and saucers to be washed. "I must have put it down there with *Dadu's* tea-cup," said Mummy. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be!" said Daddy in a burst of affection. "Don't you see, it was really your absentmindedness which saved the day!"

"Yes," said Vineet in staunch support. "If you had left the key in its proper place, *Dadu* would have given it long ago and we would have been robbed. And that knife in the freezer! It was a godsend..."

"I don't know how it came to be there," said Mummy, growing red with embarrassment. "I was chopping onions when the fishmonger came. I bought the fish and I remember going to the fridge to put it away in the freezer. I must have been holding the knife still and—somehow—put the knife into the freezer and brought back the fish to the kitchen counter and just left it there. What a thing to do!"

"But it was the best thing you could have done!" said Vineet. "If you had not kept the knife in the freezer, I couldn't have held on against the man. Thank you for leaving it there!"

"Yes, bouma (daughter-in-law)," said Dadu.
"Thank you for being absent-minded. And thank you, Vineet, for having the presence of mind to use the knife when you found it!"

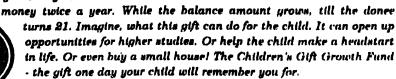


In these eyes lie your dreams. In your hands, the future.



Children's Gift Growth Fund.

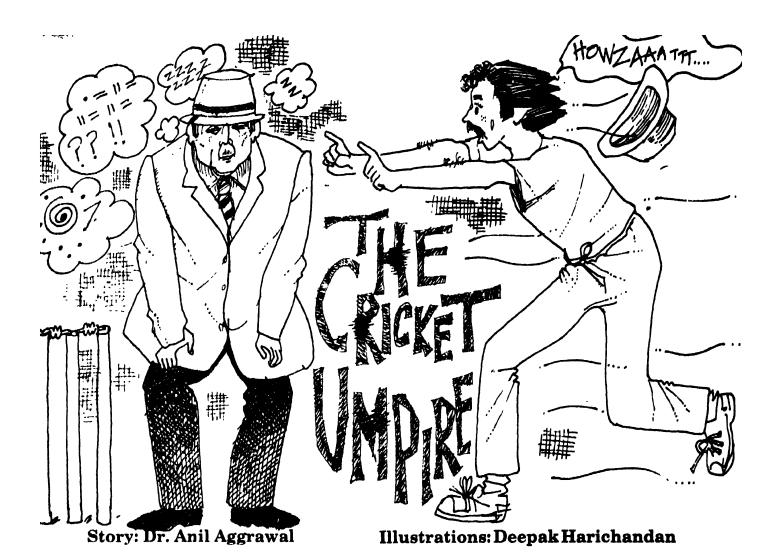
Ah, how you fuss over the dear one! And attend to the little one's every nee!. Making the tiny one secure every moment of the day. Isn't it also the right time to think of the little one's future? To plan a little today. And gift the child a brighter tomorrow. With our Children's Gift Growth Fund, you can gift to any child below 15 years of age. The gift should be in multiples of 100 Units (Rs. 1000/-) with a minimum of 200 Units (Rs.2,000/-). You may either make a one time gift or may continue gifting the child at regular intervals. The gift will grow by way of reinvestment of annual dividend and honus dividend declared every 3 years. At 18, the donee child can withdraw





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There was yet another loud and confident appeal from the bowler, the wicket-keeper and the close-in fielders. The ball had struck the legs of the batsman, while he was plumb in front of the wicket.

The umpire scratched his head in confusion. He did not know what to make of that appeal. He wasn't sure if the batsman was out. He had a very sharp brain, which never failed him, but this last month or so, he felt his

faculties were blunting. Was he getting old?

He gave the verdict in favour of the batsman. There were moans and groans of protest not only from the bowlers and fielders, but also from the spectators. Everyone was sure the batsman was out. Even the batsman himself was pleasantly surprised. Was the umpire getting older?

The umpire realised his mistake from the spectators' dissatisfied grunts. He had to do something about his faltering decisions. And he had better

do it fast.

"What's the problem, doctor?" Chandru, the umpire, asked his doctor in the evening.

"Was the sunlight dull today?" asked the doctor.

"Well, yes, I am afraid it was. What's the matter, doctor? Are you thinking I couldn't see well? I swear I could see everything clearly. It was just that I could not take a decision. And when I did take it, it turned out to be wrong."

"Come over to my clinic.
I think I know what your problem is. But before saying anything, I will

have to give you a thorough test," replied the doctor, who had a degree in electrical engineering, rather than in medicine.

In the evening the doctor gave Chandru a thorough test. After the test he smiled, "Well! It turned out as expected, Chandru. We had given you a solar cell to run the circuits of your brain. But I now find that the Selenium in those solar cells has worn out, and your brain circuits are not getting enough current. Ordinari-

ly you do your job fairly well, but you experience problems whenever there is insufficient sunlight. And when you have to make complicated decisions like lbw, you find yourself in a still greater dilemma. Actually, you were made just because human umpires were unable to make flawless decisions. Their limited information, processing capabilities and national prejudice made them rather unsatisfactory candidates for the job of umpires. You have been

doing your job admirably, but even you need to get your solar cells serviced."

"So what do I do now?" asked Chandru.

"Well, take these ordinary torch cells for the present. You will be fine for tomorrow's match. When the match concludes this Saturday, come over to me, and I will overhaul your solar cells."

Chandru took the cells and trudged back home. 'Even robots are not flawless,' he was thinking....





Text: O.P. Bhagat

O many of us May means the coming of summer—hot days, if they have not already begun in the last week or two of April.

In other words, a strong sun, scorching winds and dust storms. Add to these the other discomforts which the hot, very hot, weather brings.

A month like this seems hardly the time when you have festivals or feel in a festive mood. But May is not all that colourless.

Those who have read English poetry, know of a different May. There, May stands for all the beauty and joy of Spring. As it is in England, so is it in the

Illustrations: Beejee

other cold countries.

Perhaps not many of you have heard of Maia. In Greek legend she is the mother of Hermes. The Romans honoured her as a nature goddess.

Even those who know nothing about the goddess refer to her when they say May. The month, through Maius (Latin), gets its English name from Maia.

Parks, meadows, woods—all are green and full of bird-song and flowers in May. Or, as Wordsworth says:

As with the heart of May Doth every beast keep holiday.

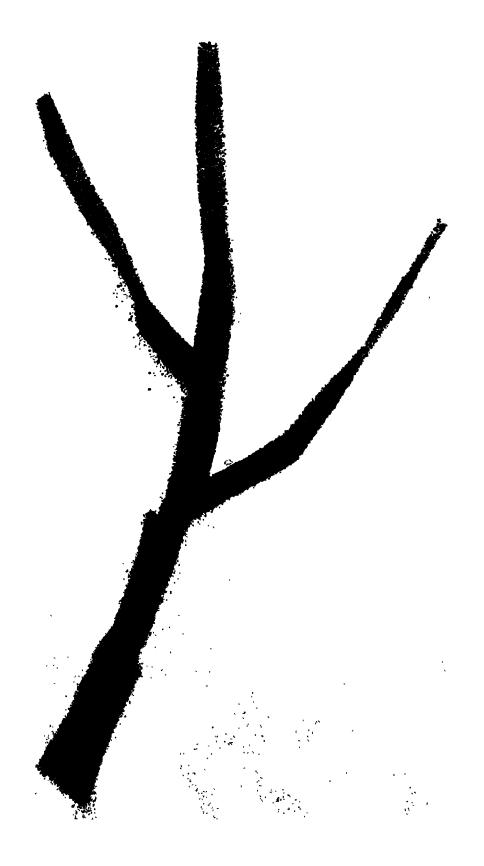
May has long been a festive month in England.

Though Spring comes earlier there, it is celebrated on May Day, the first of the month. This is also called maying. 'To go a-Maying', means the same.

Dancing is an essential part of the celebrations. People dance round maypoles—poles painted and decked with ribbons and flowers. Maypoles, we are told, stand for trees. Dancing round them is a custom that goes far back to the days of tree worship.

By the way, when they dance at Holi in Garhwal, the merry-makers carry a large tree branch from which hang ribbons of

CHILDREN'S WORLD MAY 1995



many colours.

A girl is chosen to be queen of the games on May Day. She is crowned with flowers. In her prettiest frock, she is escorted to her throne in a garden or a grassy glade.

May Day is also associated with Robin Hood.
The outlaw of Sherwood
Forest died on this day, it is said. Robin Hood plays were once common during May Day celebrations.

The month has its superstitions too. In some countries, May is not considered a lucky month for getting married. This is a very old belief. It dates back, some say, to the early days of sowing and planting. All hands were needed for work then. This left one with no time for marrying and honeymooning.

As a follow-up, children born in May were supposed to be sickly. Kittens, for example, born in May, would be slow to catch mice.

For the past 100 years, May Day has had an added importance. It is celebrated as Labour Day as well. Workers all over the world hold rallies and meetings on May 1.

May Day is also written as Mayday. But do not confuse it with mayday.

This (from the Frenchm'aider which means help me) is an international distress signal, used by ships and aircraft.

Even otherwise our May is not all heat and dust. It has a nice and colourful side too.

Coming forth around mid-April (in Delhi) the gulmohur flowers look gay yet. The amaltas (golden cassia) blooms a week or so later. It looks its best in May.

In the gardens you will see lilies and jasmines. At night the raat ki rani, a variety of jasmine, scents the air.

Ours is a summer filled with fruits. It is the season of melons and mangoes, of plums, peaches, apricots, litchis and cherries. More fruits are on the way.

Then there are the cool delights like *kulfi*, ice-cream and *falooda*. Not the less delightful are *sherbet*, squash, milkshake and spicy *jal jeera*. And the many brands of fizzy drinks.

Some people throw garden parties or arrange

them on their farms or at the poolside. Singing, swimming and feasting go on for hours.

Soon it is vacation time. Schools and colleges take a break for about two months. Groups of students go on excursions to the hills or other places.

Some opt for adventure sports or go on trips to an out-of-the-way lake or the source of a river or to a wildlife sanctuary or a shrine like Badrinath.

In the hills Spring comes in late March or early April. Almond, apple



and other fruit trees flower then and look lovely. The hill people have their own Spring songs and celebrations.

In May—sometimes in April—Sikkim has an international flower festival. More than 500 varieties of orchids are then displayed in Gangtok. Safari and river rafting are among the festival's highlights.

At the other extreme is Kerala, where *Pooram*, a grand temple festival, lasting several days is celebrated in Trichur. One of its features is the friendly rivalry between two groups belonging to the main temples.

Each parades 15 richly decorated elephants. On their backs are held aloft large, bright umbrellas. Peacock fans are waved from there. All this is done to the music of flutes, pipes and drums. At night there is a dazzling display of fireworks.

On the full moon day in the Indian month of Vaisakh—it is May then falls the Buddha Jayanti.

This is the Buddha's birthday. He was born as a prince in Kapilavastu more than 2500 years ago. Later, he became the Enlightened One on this day. When 80, he died on

the same day.

His death was nirvana, the release from the cycle of births.

The name given to him at birth was Siddhartha. Astrologers told the king that his son would become either a great ruler or a great teacher.

The king brought up his son in luxury. Nothing old, infirm or ugly was allowed near him. In time he was married to a charming princess.

But all in vain. The prince was often lost in thought. Then he happened to see an old man and a sick man. Also a dead man. He wondered why there was pain in the world.

One night he left the palace and set out in search of the truth. He spoke to several gurus. He fasted and went through other hardships. But the truth still eluded him.

Then one day, when he was meditating under a tree, it flashed through his mind. Right living was the way to nirvana.

Buddhism was once popular in India. Now there are not many Buddhists in the country. A lot more are there in Sri Lanka, Burma, Tibet, China and Japan.

Sri Lanka celebrates

the Buddha's birthday as Wesak. The word is obviously from Vaisakh.

There are many books that tell the Buddha's story. Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* tells it in the form of a long poem.

Jatakas are tales of the previous births of the Buddha. They include the Master's parables—moral stories—as well.

If you happen to come to Delhi, do visit the Buddha Jayanti Park. It was built to mark his 2500th birth anniversary. Among its attractions are the trees and shrubs associated with the life of the Buddha.





Recipes: Jaya Parmasivan

Illustration: Chaitali Chatterjee

Summer days are here again. Hot, still air. The blazing sun. Glaring light everywhere. You hurry home, longing for cold beverages to slake your parched throat. Or with the summer holidays on, you would like to make and serve something cold to your friends when they come over.

Here are a few cool drinks that can be served quickly to beat the heat when you meet!

A cool beverage with a tradition.

Requirement for 6 glasses:

250 gms of jaggery (gur).

6 glasses of water.
Juice a one large
lemon.

4 green cardamoms (powdered).

a pinch of dried ginger powdered (sonth).

Method:

1. Crush and dissolve the jaggery in water. Strain to remove impurities.

- 2. Add lemon juice. Stir well.
- 3. Add powdered cardamom and dried ginger.
- 4. Chill in refrigerator. Serve cold.

(Increase or decrease the quantity of jaggery according to taste).

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To make 6 cups of juice:

4 cups of pineapple

4 medium sized carrots cut into 1" pieces.

1/2" thick slice of a lemon with skin and seeds removed.

2 cups of ice cubes (crushed).

2 tablespoons of sugar.

1/4 teaspoon salt.

(Here is an easy way to crush ice cubes: Pile the ice cubes on a clean cloth gather the edges around the pile and smack it hard against the kitchen slab. But make sure you don't break the slab in the process!)

Method:

- 1. Put the juice, carrot pieces, lemon slice, sugar and salt in the mixer and blend it well.
- 2. Add crushed ice. Turn it in the mixie for a minute and pour it in glasses or cups.
 - 3. Serve cold.

8 glasses:

6 large, ripe tomatoes. Juice of one large lemon.

1 tablespoon sugar.

34 teaspoon salt.

½ teaspoon pepper powder.

1 small capsicum (seeds removed—cut into thin strips).

1 small cucumber (peeled—cut into strips).

A few mint leaves.

6 glasses of water. Ice cubes.

Method:

- 1. Cut tomatoes and make puree by blending it in the mixer.
- 2. Add 3 glasses of water.
- 3. Add lemon juice, sugar, salt, pepper—cover and turn it once in the mixer to mix well.
- 4. Add the rest of the water.
- 5. Remove and chill in the fridge.
 - 6. Pour in glasses.
 - 7. Add ice cubes.
- 8. Decorate top with strips of capsicum and cucumber and mint leaves, just before serving.

Requirement for 6 glasses:

One large water melon. Juice of one large lemon.

Requirement to yield

150 gms sugar. Crushed ice. Basil leaves.

Method:

- 1. Peel and cut melon into cubes. Remove pips and pith
- 2. Blend the melon in the mixer.
- 3. Add lemon juice, sugar and mix it well.
- 4. Pour into a container and chill.
- 5. Pour into glasses. Add crushed ice before serving.
- 6. Decorate each glass with a leaf of basil to add to the flavour.

Requirements for 6 cups:

6 cups cold milk.

4 tablespoons cocoa powder.

2 tablespoons powdered sugar.

3 large cups vanilla ice cream.

Method:

- 1. Put milk, cocoa and sugar in the mixer and blend thoroughly.
- 2. Add ice creamspooning it into the mixer in small helpings.
- 3. Cover. Whip for 1/2 minute in the mixer.
- 4. Remove and serve immediately in glasses or cups.

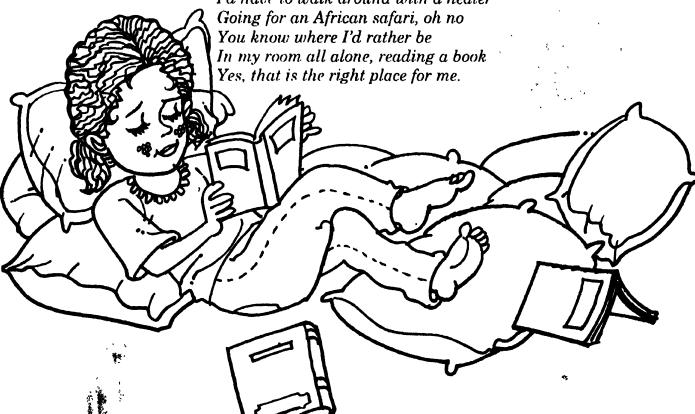
A GREAT HOLIDAY

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (10)

No, not strolling on the Californian beaches

Or in Disney World (no way)

Those are definitely not my ideas of A fantastic holiday
Travelling through Singapore or Italy Is not my cup of tea
You call Paris cool and glamorous
Well, that doesn't exactly suit me
Skiing in the icy Alps
But I can't ski a millimetre
Besides the heavy bulky clothes
I'd have to walk around with a heater



DO ALL INDIANS KNOW ALL ABOUT SWEETS?

- WHO INTRODUCED THE ROSSOGOLLA AT HOME AND ABROAD
- WHO FIRST CANNED ROSSOGOLLAS?
- WHO INVENTED THE ROSSOMALAI?
- WHO FIRST INTRODUCED A RANGE OF SWEETS FOR DIABETICS?
- WHO FIRST THOUGHT OF CREATING A 'SONDESH' WITH

 'CHHANAR PAYESH' INSIDE IT?

 (HINT: IT IS CALLED AMRITA KUMBHA)
- WHO WAS THE FIRST TO BRING YOU A "SONDESH CAKE"?

YES, YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT SWEETS IF YOU JUST SAID

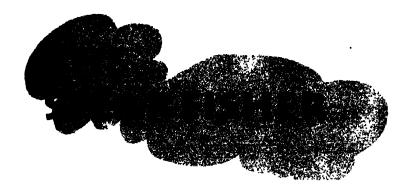
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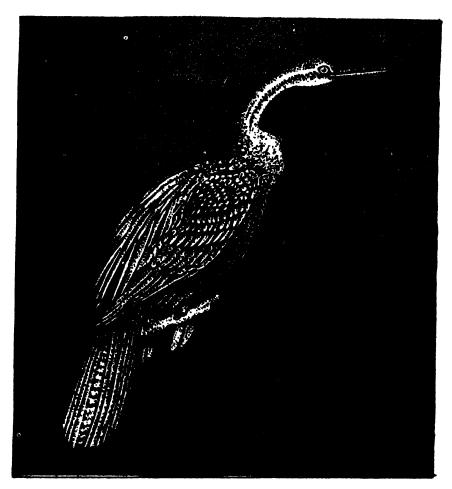
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Text: Preeti Ramesh Illustration: Shailesh B. CEE-NFS



KIES near freshwater lakes and marshes sometimes appear crowded with flying crosses. These crosses are made not by any supernatural phenomenon but by long-necked birds

commonly known as snake birds or Anhinga.

Belonging to the order Pelicaniformes, Anhinga or the snake bird is found all over India, south of the Himalayan foothills.
Frequenting swamps,

ponds, lakes and rivers with floating vegetation, the snake bird derives its name from the manner in which it fishes, its serpentine neck and head swaying from side to side while the rest of its body remains submerged underwater.

There are four species of the genus Anhinga. The Indian snake bird is called the Anhinga melanogaster. Known as pan dubi in Hindi, it has also earned the name 'darter' due to the curious habit of jerking its neck to catch its prey. This jerking effect is made possible by the presence of a unique hinge mechanism between its eighth and ninth neck vertebrae.

About 90 cm in length, the snake bird is black in colour and its back and wings are streaked with silver grey. The head and neck are brown while its throat is white. The males tend to be darker than the females. The darter's neck alone accounts for a third of its body length.

The snake birds have adapted themselves very well to the necessity of fishing for food. Though occasionally they may eat tadpoles and frogs, their main diet consists of fish. Their feet are webbed

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which enables them to skim above the surface of the water quite effortlessly. Though their plumage tends to get permeated by water and needs to be dried constantly, the body feathers are very small and coarse and dry fast. After fishing, snake birds sit on branches and spread out their wings to catch the sun.

Perhaps the best asset of the snake bird is its bill. Long. straight, and sharp. the bill has serrated edges. The snake bird can thus successfully spear the body of a hapless fish under water. It then tosses the fish into the air and swallows it head first. Diving into water creating barely a ripple, the darters are expert swimmers, using their webbed feet and wings for propulsion and as rudders for steering underwater. They spread their wings slightly and propel their head forward with sudden ierks, freezing after every thrust. They can also shift internally stored air to change buoyancy--one minute they are visible above the water's surface and in the next they disappear. The darters have a hairy lining in their stomachs and it is believed that this helps them to dispose of fish

bones. External nostrils are absent in adults, which also helps them fish underwater.

Snake birds have very healthy appetites; they are known to consume 40 small fish a day while in captivity!

Shy by nature, darters are seldom seen in large flocks, except when they nest in mixed colonies. They are quite loquacious when nesting, making shrill, cackling noises. The snake bird's nest is an untidy stick platform which is three to thirty feet above water. The nesting season begins in May and continues until November. The male darter selects the nest site and calls for a mate by waving and flapping its wings. The female builds the nest from twigs brought by the male.

Female Anhingas
generally lay a clutch of
three to five eggs at a
time. The eggs are pointed
at one end and pale blue
in colour at first, but
become dirty during the
incubation period which
takes twenty-four to
thirty days. The darter
makes use of its webbed
feet to warm the eggs
during incubation.

Both the male and female share the responsibility of caring for their

young. Small chicks are fed a regurgitated fluid which is poured down their bill by the parents. Older chicks are more aggressive and thrust their bill into their parent's throat for food. When they are thirsty, jets of water are squirted down their throats by the parents. To escape from terrestrial predators. Anhingas plunge into water. Young chicks who follow their parents into the water often never make it back to the nest. Young darters stay in the nest for six to eight weeks.

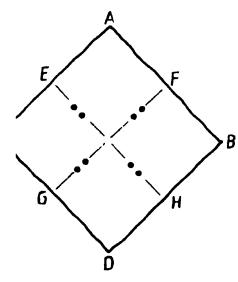
From the months of July to December, darters are found in northern India. They winter in South India during the months of December to February.

Feathers of the darters, called silver stripes, are used to make badges, brooches, head dresses etc. Some tribes in Assam and Bengal use the darters like fishing rods to catch fish. They tie a cord around its neck so that it doesn't swallow the fish that it catches.

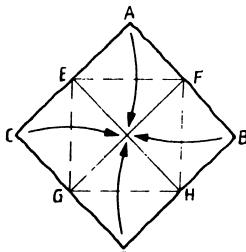
The loss of natural habitat due to developmental demand for land threatens the future survival of this graceful fishing bird.

Use stiff paper, a square of 18

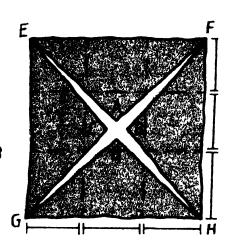
Use stiff paper, a square of 18 inches.



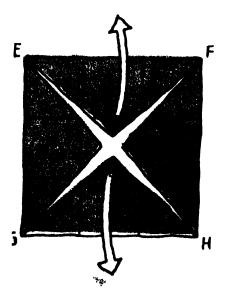
1. Fold and unfold paper to form creases as shown.



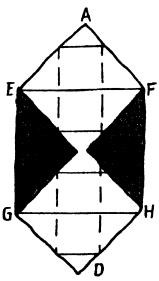
2. Fold corners A, B, C and D to the centre.



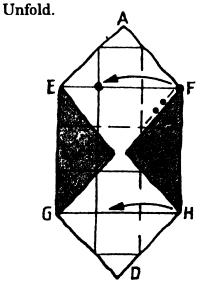
3. Divide horizontally and vertically into thirds.



4. Unfold corners A and D.

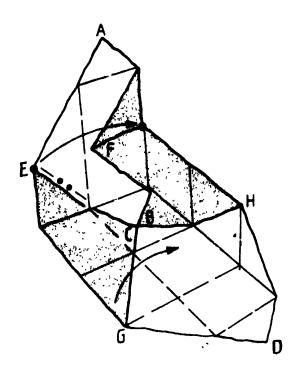


5. Re-crease as shown. Unfold.

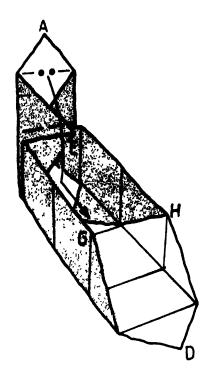


6. Collapse as shown, forming three separate creases and folding dot to dot.

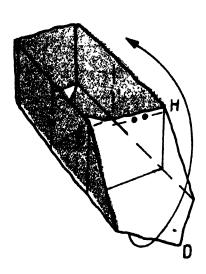




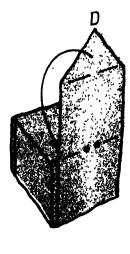
7. Repeat Step 6 collapsing from left to cover corner F and making another corner.



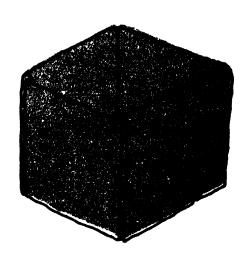
8. Lock by wrapping A over the edge of the box to rest at the bottom of the box between corners C and B, as in Step 4.



9. Repeat Steps 6-7 with G and H.



10. Repeat Step 8 to lock the box's edge. Corners A, B, C and D lie at the bottom of the box.



11. The box is complete.

DO TOUSELF Text: SS Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

2345 A 3743 h)

CRAYON SCRATCHBOARD

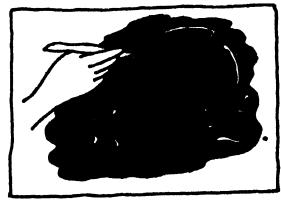
Materials:

Cardboard Crayons

A sharp pointed object (like a pair of scissors)



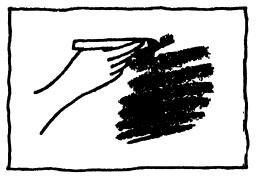
- 1. Cover the cardboard with patches of bright colour/colours.
- 2. Cover heavily over the whole cardboard with black crayon.
- 3. Scratch out a design in the layer of the black crayon.
- 4. Abracadabra! The bright magic colours and pattern appears underneath.





1. Cover entire area with crayons.

2. Cover over with black crayon.



3. Scratch

out design with stick. **PINWHEEL**

Materials:

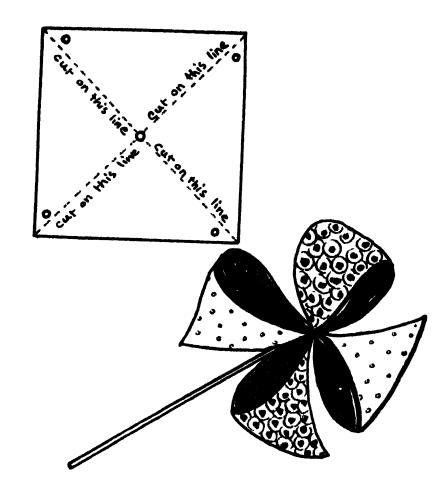
Stiff Manila paper Crayons or poster paints

Straight pins
Unsharpened pencil
with eraser top
Cardboard
Cellophane tape

Method:

1. On stiff Manila paper, draw a square of 7 inches and its diagonals.

- 2. Colour with crayons or poster paints as shown.
- 3. Cut out the pinwheel and cut in on each dotted line. Stop before you reach the centre.
- 4. Make a hole at each of the dots with a straight pin.
- 5. Lift each of these points and bend them to meet over the centre hole.
 - 6. Tape together.
- 7. Cut a cardboard circle, about ½ inch in diameter.
- 8. Push straight pin first through cardboard circle, then through the centre hole of pinwheel.
- 9. Finally push pin in eraser on top of an unsharpened pencil.





Peel Paper off Crayons.

2. Melt crayon in flame.



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WAX PAINTING (CRAYON ENCAUSTIC)

Materials:

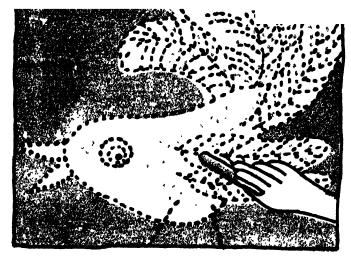
Crayons
White drawing paper or cardboard
Lighted candle

Method:

- 1. Make a light sketch with pencil of the picture you want to make.
- 2. Peel the paper off the lower half of the crayons to be used.
- 3. Dip the point of the crayon into the flame of the candle carefully.

- 4. Quickly transfer the crayon to the surface of the paper.
- 5. You can make small dots or spread it on in streaks.
- 6. The final effect will be like that of oil paints.

Note: This process does not ruin your crayons for further use.



3. Dot crayon on paper.

Materials:

Discarded lipstick container

Flannelette 2"x3"
Several needles,
straight pins, safety pins,
plastic toothpicks

Different coloured threads

Pinking shears

Method:

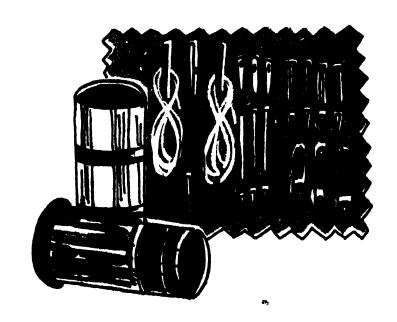
Make a compact sewing kit with a clean, discarded lipstick container.

- 1. Cut a piece of flannelette 2x3 inches with pinking shears.
- 2. Arrange safety pins, needles and straight pins in a row across the flannelette.
- 3. Force several plastic toothpicks through the flangelette.

- 4. Wind lengths of threads of different colours around the toothpicks as shown.
 - 5. Roll up the flannel-

ette tightly and slip it into the bottom half of the lipstick tube.

6. Shut by sliding on the top half.





BIJOY kicked hard at a tin can. It rattled down the street. A few stray cats fled from the garbage pile. He was in a bad mood. His mother was always nagging him to come home soon—before night fell, before it was dark. Ha!—as if he were a girl!

Why couldn't he stay out with his friends? All his friends stayed out late. Their mothers did not make such a big fuss, did they? They went home whenever they pleased. Why did he not have such an understanding parent? Was it because he was the only child? And she got all weepy too if he was late. That hurt him. But his friends called it "emotional blackmail"! Was it true? Maybe it was. He should not be taken in by tears.

He could not tell his woes to anyone but his dog, Cougar. Cougar was a darling dog. He was the sweetest thing in the world. Bijoy loved him so much that sometimes it hurt. And Cougar was very lovable. Bijoy's moth er had brought him for Bijoy's fifteenth birthday, two years earlier.

Cougar had been a cuddly, furry bundle,



black and brown in colour. Scared of sounds, he was a very curious canine, sniffing all over the house, getting used to the new environment and eating almost anything. Greedy he had been, but now he ate only select things.

Cougar had attached himself automatically to Bijov, sensing that this was his master. Bijov had felt his heart swell with pride and joy. When Bijoy returned from an outing. Cougar welcomed him home with vociferous barks, wet licks and by tearing round the house and rolling over to be tickled. He did not behave like that with Bijoy's mother, father or the servants.

Well, to tell the truth, Cougar's enthusiasm was at its peak only when he spotted Bijoy. He would sit only at Bijoy's feet (he even slept with him). The immense sense of satisfaction that Bijoy experienced when he felt Cougar's warm body against his feet, he could not express. He loved Cougar best in the world.

Cougar did not complain when he returned late, except to welcome him happily. Cougar did not this when he got low grades, just licked him consolingly. Why, oh why couldn't Mom be like Cougar?

Bijoy rang the bell of his house, cocking up his ears to hear Cougar's welcome bark and pattering of feet. But the house was silent. Bijov could not believe it. No welcoming bark from Cougar? Why? He banged on the door, suddenly worried. The front light flicked on, Mother opened the door. Her face was blotched with tears. Oh no, emotional blackmail again! He did not look at her, but strode inside. Still no sign of his pet. Bijoy's room was also empty.

"Mom, where is Cougar?" asked Bijoy. Mother was sitting on the edge of the sofa. Silently. Sulking may be. Then Moti, the cook, said, "Cougar went out and has not returned."

"What nonsense! He always returns immediately," said Bijoy. And it was true. Cougar usually 'urinated' or 'pottied' quite nearby, and came running back after snarling at a few birds or crows who did not even glance at him!

Suddenly Bijoy felt cold. His mother's sad posture worsened matters. He shook her, "Mom, tell me what happened."

In between long pauses, the story came out. Cougar had gone out and began barking at a few dogs. His habit of chasing other dogs out of his territory was something that Bijov had not been able to curb. So far, no harm had been done. But today some dogs had snarled at him and Cougar had panicked. Instead of retreating, he had fled. And the dogs had given chase. By the time the servants could go after him, the 'dog squad' had vanished.

Bijov sat down and howled. His mother, unable to stand the sight. disappeared into the kitchen and banged a few pots and pans pretending to be busy. Bijoy sobbed louder when he heard that all the servants and his mother too had searched the whole colony repeatedly, asking all and sundry if they had seen Cougar. Some had not, some said they had seen him disappearing like a black streak of lightning; but where they could not say.

"I will go and see," he sobbed and sped out. It was almost two hours when he returned dejected and stony-eyed.

"Somebody has caught him or he would be back by now," consoled his mother looking at a spot above his head.

"No o o o...Mom, suppose the dogs have bitten him to death? Mom, he is so small and helpless. What could he do? Oh Mom, I can't bear it. My Cougar..." The boy wept again, broken heartedly.

"Let us wait till morning. We will leave the gate open, so that he can come in," said his mother hugging her boy, her heart heavy. She too loved Cougar and the house seemed desolate without him and his barks. Where could he have gone? He should be back by now if he was safe and sound. God forbid any road accidents. Pet dogs panic on the roads and may run straight under vehicles. She sighed.

"That is a nightmare. This is exactly how I feel when you don't return home early," she said.

Bijoy looked at her, his eyes awash with tears. His darling mother—now he understood his mother's feelings. If he could feel so miserable over Cougar, how much more anxious she would be over him. He hugged her tightly and made a silent promise. He would never be home late in future.

Oh, if only he could find Cougar, he would be the best son in the world!

That night Bijoy sat outside waiting for Cougar, but no welcoming bark was heard at all. Bijoy developed a high fever. His mother and father were worried. Father had gone about searching for Cougar with the car and had also inserted an advertisement in the papers.

It was in the afternoon that a boy of the neighbourhood came to the gate and shouted, "Bijoy, I have found Cougar. Come fast."

Bijoy shot up, fever and all and rushed out.
"Where, where is he?"

"He is hiding in a house, biting everybody," said the boy.

"What? Biting everybody? But why?"

"You come, I did not ask for details. Let us go."

Bijoy, barefoot, ran all the way to the 8th cross from 14th cross (where he lived) and gingerly entered a garden. The people of the house were waiting worriedly. "Yesterday morning he came rushing inside our compound and hid under those bushes. He was petrified. You see, street dogs were chasing

him. We heard a racket and came to see. Our gate was open and he rushed in. He has not moved from there. Poor thing," they said.

By this time Bijoy had called out to Cougar. Cougar crouching behind the bushes had cocked up his ears at the sound of his beloved master's voice. He poked his head out and whimpered. Bijoy crying profusely put out his hand and Cougar came out. He jumped up and licked

Bijoy, his tail wagging furiously.

"Oh Cougar, where have you been?" Bijoy picked him up and hugged him. After some time he thanked the people who smiled and nodded, moved by the sight of the crying boy and dog.

Bijoy put Cougar on the ground.

"Home, Cougar, home, walk," sang Bijoy. His fever had miraculously vanished and both fell into step. At every house

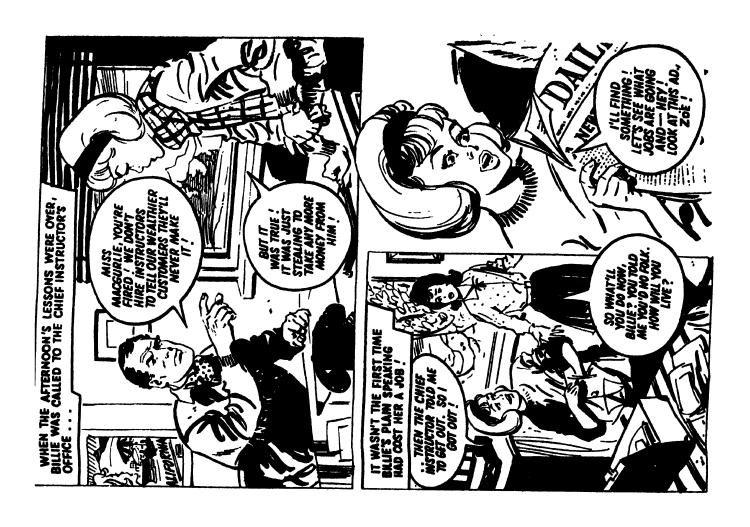
people hailed them, "Hey! Got back Cougar? Hey, Bijoy, where did you find him? Hullo, Cougar, old boy! Where had you been?" etc..... Bijoy answered warming up to them, but not stopping.

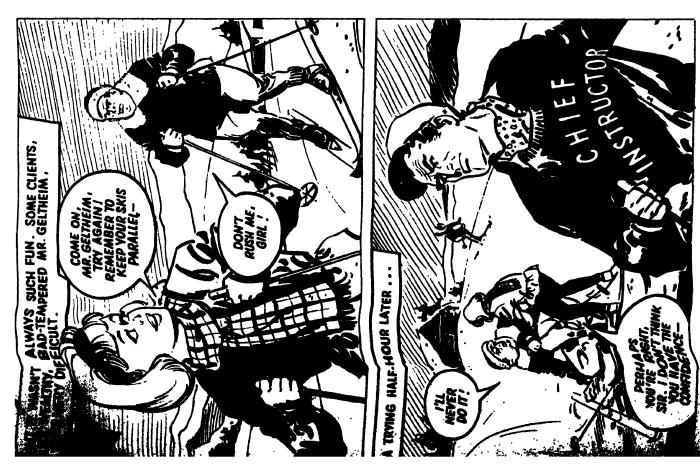
First he had to get back home to his anxious mother and tell her that Cougar was safe and sound... And also that her son, Bijoy, would never ever put her through this type of 'waiting nightmare' again!!!









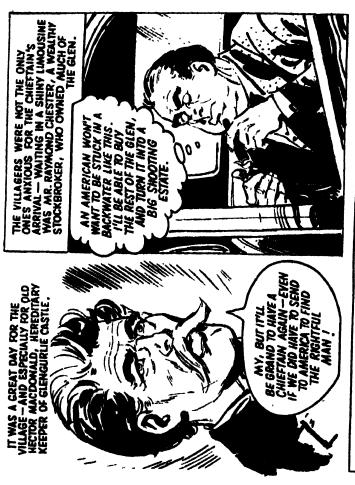




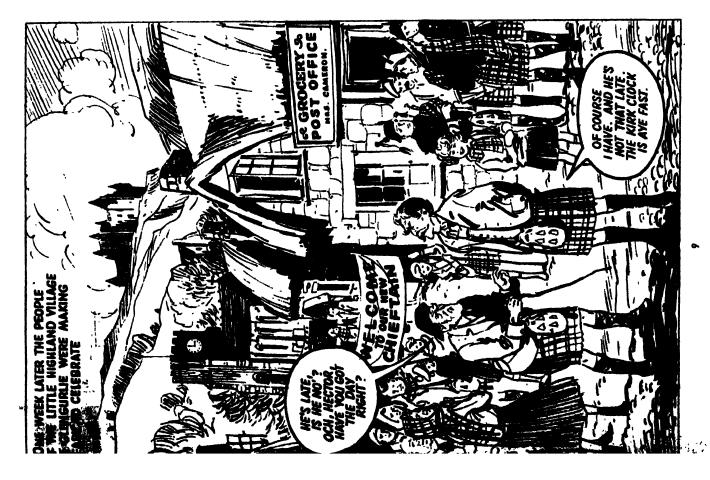


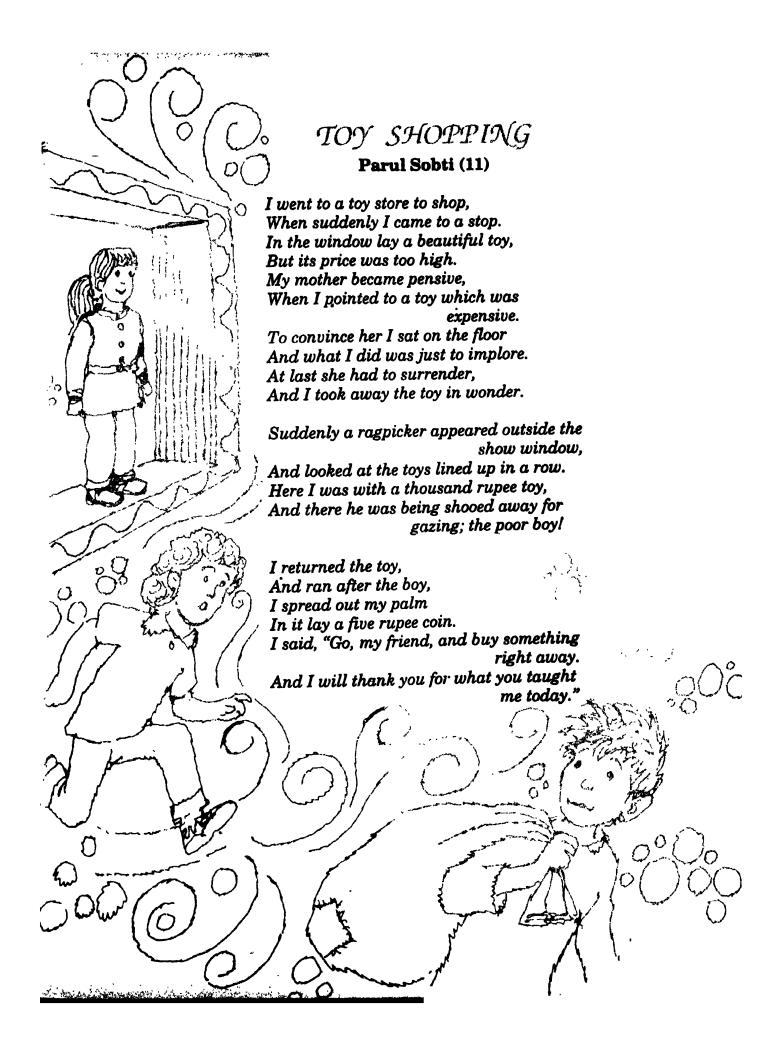


9









Summer Reading

- 1. Mathematics By K.V. Singh
- 2. Physics
 Amrita Patel
- 3. Computers
 Kirtimaya Varma
- 4. Electronics
 Kirtimaya Varma
- 5. Politics
 Sanjana Sharma
- 6. Sports
 Anupam Ganguli
- 7. Plants
 Neena Chowdhary
 All published by
 Learner's Press 1995
 Rs. 30/- per volume

A quiz book is perhaps the easiest available source of information on a particular subject, if compiled intelligently. It can fall in one of two categories—one that tests an expert and one that imparts knowledge to a learner.

The Quiz Master Series falls in both categories, with some volumes falling in the former category (Computers, Electronics, Plants) and some in the latter.

The authors have tried to make the books as comprehensive as possible given their size. The volumes on Politics, Environment and Sports are quite informative. For instance, environment covers everything from population explosion to symbols and slogans.

Sports is heavily loaded with questions on cricket. perhaps due to the availability of vast reference materials on the subject, in the country. The coverage of other sports is rather unsatisfactory. For instance, in the section on Badminton, there is a question on the number of feathers in a shuttle, but no mention of Sved Modi. the man who has won the maximum number of national titles! Lots of questions have been formulated obviously to make for numbers.

The author clubs together all sports other than the few popular ones in India, in one chapter, curiously called Pandora's Box. One wonders if the author opened a host of problems for himself with those sports!

Perhaps the best presented volumes are Physics and Mathematics. The latter is of interest even to a novice, so cleverly have the topics been chosen. The format is uniform too—all of them are the multiple choice questions.

The volume on Politics is very comprehensive, with few irrelevant questions.

There are a lot of aberrations too. For one, the format is irksome. There are matching of columns, filling in of blanks and stating whether a statement is true or false—more like exercises in a textbook than like questions in a quiz book. This is especially jarring since the books are clearly meant for the older age group of 12+.

In the true or false section, the right answers are not given, giving rise to doubts. In Computers (Page 9), there is one that states "Irrational fear of the computer is called agoraphobia. The answer is False. One is left wondering if there is indeed such a phobia and if so, what it is called.

The covers are too slick and are rather distracting.

The collage effect has been overdone, making it difficult to read the titles of some volumes.

If one were to overlook these aberrations, the series is a good one and will be a useful collection in a student's home library. The price at Rs.30/-a volume is rather steep though.

Thangamani

- 1. An Elephant Remembers
- 2. The Turtle Beach
- 3. The Tree Savers
- 4. The Magic Plant By Shushmita Dutt Illustrations by Veenu Jacob
- 1. Swan Song
- 2. Not A Drop To Drink By Nilima Sinha Illustrations by Veenu Jacob
- 1. Earth's Concern
- 2. Don't Pester Them
 By Hema Rao
 All covers designed
 by Shushmita Dutt
 and Bhaskar Dutt
 All priced Rs.15
 All published by
 Learners Press,
 New Delhi

These eight books (each containing two stories) form a series which aims at making children more aware of environmental issues through the medi-

um of short stories. They voice urgent concern for this endangered planet of ours. "Save Our Earth," is their overall message, as indicated on the cover and inside.

Calling all children to this cause, Shushmita Dutt describes poignantly the agony of a mother turtle trying to lay her eggs on a beach strewn with bricks and broken bottles and the plight of a baby elephant when its parents are killed by poachers ("An Elephant Remembers"). She underscores the importance of scientifically studying wild plants that were known to have medicinal properties (The Magic *Plant)* and the urgency of letting plants and animals co-exist with men (The Tree Squers). However, a small doubt assails one. Black bucks are known to be very shy animals. Would they ever "Wander past some of the distant huts of the village" as in the illustration (pp 30-31)—however friendly the villagers were?

Both in Not A Drop To Drink and Ramesh Brushes His Teeth, Nilima Sinha drives home the message that water is a most precious resource, as any buried treasure.

In Earth's Concern by Hema Rao, inhabitants of Galacteo, a high-tech planet where the environment is kept clean under a shield of fibreglass, come to the earth in search of a toad (not available in Galacteo) and are shocked by earth's pollution level. They try to patch up a hole in the ozone laver that had developed over the Antarctica, but ultimately realise that it is the inhabitants of earth who will have to solve their own problems. In Carbon Dioxide Rights A Wrong, the gases are personified as characters communicating with the world of men. Don't Pester Them is about the harmful effects of chemical pesticides and fertilisers.

While the books do rouse interest, they could perhaps have been more informative. For example, Tiny but Effective in Don't Pester Them could have differentiated between toxic, nuclear and petrochemical waste, and The Tree Savers could have contained some statistical information about black bucks.

Bright, glossy and colourful, the covers make you want to take up the books at once. The illustrations by Veenu Jacob

(i.e. the illustrations in six out of the eight books) however are not quite comfortable visually. They are too crowded with unnecessary details (e.g., The Tree Savers, p 36, Swan Song, p 33) are too full of lines in relation to the size of the page (e.g., The Tree Savers, p 21, and An Elephant Remembers, p 10).

At Rs 120, the books will make a pretty little gift set. Save Our Earth—the message they deliver so delightfully—is a message that should go round.

Tales Old and New By Mariam Karim Ahlawat Illustrated by Kavita Jaiswal Published by Harper Collins Publishers India

This book is in two sections: Tales My Grandmother Told and New Fairy Tales. The first section re-tells some typical fairy tales in not a very innovative fashion. But the second section contains stories that are startlingly different, and it is here that the book scores. It relates fairy tales to current issues like the gender bias, violence

against women, dowry deaths and illiteracy among women.

Fairy tales are among the first formative influences on a child's mind. So fairy tales should also grow and develop, reflecting changes in India's socio-economic life.

The Magic Bat deals with the prevalent bias against women playing cricket. In the end, Rahty finds that there are no magic bats for girls, and that to wield a bat, one must be a male. But Rahty is spunky enough to say, "Then you can keep your old bat—I'd rather be a girl, any day!" (p 47).

The Captive Deer is a parable about a hunter (man?) and a deer (woman?). The man hunts down and even tricks into captivity the free-roaming deer that catches his fancy. But later, as the deer grows sluggish in bondage, the man loses all interest in it. Curiously, he still does not let it go. For, he feels it is his possession. The deer has to break away in order to get back to the jungle.

In The Little Companion, the prince thinks that Princess Vidushi, his betrothed, will be better off sitting at home, reading or embroidering, while he himself goes out hunting and sailing before he finally settles down to a family life. The princess however finds another companion for himself an ugly dwarf—and has the guts to say "No" to her fiance.

"The princess who was too large" is about the Indian mother's "jealousy" when a son brings home a bride of his own choice and the Indian son's attachment to his mother and his ancestral house. Because he is "homesick", he makes his bride leave her home, and because she does not fit into that set-up, he cuts her down to size again and again till there is hardly anything left of her. Reduced to total dependency upon others, she goes back to her "own" people and a wizard there makes her whole again. But she never goes back to the prince whom she had loved. Husband and wife spend their lives missing each other. The motherin-law, of course, never repents.

The Curse of the Old Witch is set in a familiar land where the girl-child is unwelcome, "kept illiterate and stupid", traded away with dowry, and bursts out in flames if she cannot satisfy her inlaws. The heroine, Nayaka, tries to change all that. She does not win her battle, but does not give up either.

Remarkably, there is no living "happily ever after" in the "new" fairy tales. The "old" ones usually had reassuring endings. Not so in The Curse of the Old Witch, or, The Princess who was too Large. The message in this genre of fairy tales is quite different. The captive deer and the much-amputatedprincess had to make a bid for freedom by themselves. The women cursed by the witch have to teach themselves to read and write, stitch clothes and make pottery.

Children today—both girls and boys—should be given this message. In fact, they have a right to this kind of literature, rather than the old.

The black-and-white illustrations by Kavita Jaiswal are sometimes too stylised (as in pages 4, 60 and 66). A brighter cover could have made the book more attractive as a gift priced at Rs 40. Editorial errors do occur. Princess Vidushi's little companion is hailed both Anandam and Anandan (pp 58-59).

The Chinese silk of the deer's coat lacks the capital "C" and "dancers" the apostrophe (p 49).

But the novelty of the "new" tales makes up for all that.

D.D.

Born To Lead By Paro Anand Published by HarperCollins Publishers India Price: Rs.40/-

What would it be like to be a Special One—a tiger, born on a stormy night, to lead, protect and save life around it? Born to Lead is a gripping tale of one such Special Tiger.

Fact and fantasy are woven nimbly and convincingly to portray a relevant modern concern—that of environmental degradation and the ravages of war.

That animal and human—a tiger and a little boy, the sole survivor in a village—become allies and put brain and brawn together to bring life into their dead forest, forms the theme of this sensitive story.

The author's eye for detail and study of the subject is evident throughout. Highly improbable may be one reaction, but

told in a highly plausible manner has to be the reaction of most readers. Credit must go to the author's superior narrative ability.

What detracts from the narrative is the poor editing and illustrations. Words like 'sustainence' (p.95), 'lusher' (p.103), 'endble' for enable (p.98), 'the de(?) beak' (p.30) and a few others should have been avoided.

The cover illustration is arresting. But the illustration on page 16 showing the cubs walking out of the forest with the tigress is factually incorrect.

Similarly, the illustration on page 84 has nothing to do with the accompanying text and should have rightly found place on page 97 or 98. Lack of editorial judgement or just a casual approach? It's a pity that a good story should have been treated so lackadaisically. Knock, knock... is anybody listening?

Saloni In Goa By Loveleen Kacker Published by HarperCollins Publishers India Price: Rs.50/-

Saloni may be Goa, but where is the cuitor?

This is a recurring query that arises as one progresses with Loveleen Kacker's latest in the Saloni series, Saloni in Goa.

The book is replete with errors of omission and commission which mar its flow. Worse still is the lasting, erroneous influence that wrong usage, spelling and punctuation (or the lack of it) can have on young minds. The instances are too many to be considered mere slips.

At the risk of sounding like a school teacher, one must emphasise the importance of something as small as the 'comma' Take, for example, the sentence (p.29) The Sun, the sea and cigarettes who wants anything else!' Apart from being incomplete in itself, the sentence implies that it is the 'cigarettes who want anything else.' Or (p.66) "The twins and Nutty left with Mario Fernandes and Saloni and I stood on the pavement." Who stood on the pavement? 'I' or 'Saloni and I'? Or (p.25) 'Oh Mother Mary let it be false' which has neither any comma nor exclamation mark to bring out the emotion behind the words. or yet again (p.80) 'Miss you are a brave girl' and

(p.82) We raced on feet sinking in the sand, breath coming in painful gasps.' How one can race with feet that sink in the ground is quite a poser.

There are several other examples. Though one need not make a fetish of using commas, they are essential. Being modern may require shedding one's inhibitions, but not shedding the comma!

In usage too, English is a tricky language. 'To smell a rat' meaning, to become suspicious, retains its singular form. To say (p.33) 'Mario smelled no rats' would make it rather literal and Goa would not be so popular if one could do so.

A word about the language some speak in Goa. It is Konkani not Konkanese (p.7) just like it is Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi, Gujarati and not Bengalese, Marathese, Punjabese or Gujaratese.

On the narrative level, Saloni in Goa is an average story, a la filmi style. The situations seem contrived as does the relationship between Dev and Saloni. Earlier there were authors trying hard to give us Indian versions of Enid Blyton's books. Here, it seems to be a watered-down version of

the Nancy Drew-Hardy boys case files. The effort to ape the West must be discarded if there is to be any literature of quality.

The author seems to labour to be 'liberated', sprinkling the dialogue with frequent doses of expressions like, 'hey Mario you betel-chewer', 'shut this bloody thing off', 'you know this feni guzzler', 'Omigod! you could be right', which give the story a false sense of heartiness.

What she must realise is that the use of foul language and slang does nothing to elevate the text from mediocrity. Quite correctly, such language fails to impress. On the other hand, it merely leaves one with a bad taste.

Bogged down as one is by all these errors, not to mention the proof reading ones, too, which pop up like hiccups throughout the narrative, coupled with crude illustrations that do little credit to the story, Saloni's crusade against drugs and gun traffickers makes jerky reading. Perhaps there is virtue in carrying the name of the editor with every book. At least it calls for some accountability.

Sudha Sanjeev

The Belling of Balu
And Other Stories
Written and illustrated
by
Jaya Paramasivan
Price: Rs.30/A Dog Named Rocky
And Other Stories
By Swapna Dutta
Illustrated by Sandeep
Sinha
Price: Rs.40/Both published by
HarperCollins
Publishers India

HarperCollins brings to its young readers two new collections of short stories. most of which have been seen in print earlier. Therefore, 'new' only describes their compilation, bound in fresh covers. Why is it that such collections do not contain the author's as yet unpublished works with, if at all, a couple of his or her best published works. instead of the other way round? Not much would have been lost to the future generation of readers if the stories in the books under review had not been put together.

The twelve stories by Jaya Paramasivan in The Belling of Balu and Other Stories cover many subjects. Bully Balu's cousins see him in a different light when he sees the humour

in being chased by an illtempered billy goat in The Belling of Balu. Could It Be that animals respond positively to music-Siddharth and Mohan find out. A lizard's timely fall from the ceiling brings Partha out of the hypnotic spell of a trickster In the Nick of Time. An urchin's honesty opens Neela's eyes to her own dishonesty in An Encounter. The new stationmaster's antagonism for crippled Nandu vanishes during a journey they undertake together in A Break for Good. A sympathetic new teacher helps Calamity Kala discover a talent for comedy.

Kiku's answer to a group of eveteasers is a matchbox full of ants in The Warriors. Even ordinary cooking is not Child's Play realise Reba and Priya. A Clever Ruse by a co-passenger causes Latika to lose her valuables to robbers. A smile can take the load off the tensions of day-to-day living, advises Aunt Chinamma in Happier with a Mile than a Cowl. In Fear of the Unknown, Gigi realises that "everybody has some kind of fear or the other, and in course of time they get over it". Discarded by its owner,

The Cursed Wallet brings luck to Dinky and Bablu.

Jaya Paramasivan has illustrated her own stories. Could one suggest that she limit her talents to writing?

There is a glaring mistake in the cover illustration of this book. Artist N. Sumaty depicts a situation from The Belling of Balu. Balu, on the cover, is being chased by a nanny goat (the illustration is explicit) while in the story it is a billy goat. Artist and editor, please note.

The cover of Swapna Dutta's A Dog Named Rocky and Other Stories is lacklustre, to say the least. Also, curiously, in the title, 'D' and 'N' are in lower case while every other word begins with a capital letter.

There are twelve stories in A Dog Named Rocky and Other Stories, too. In the title story, Rocky chooses to stay with Chumki and Bobo when his owner leaves the country. Kuttu's teacher finds a way to save his students' mango tree from being felled in 'The Mango Tree', 'Sonu's Diwali' becomes 'real' when he lights the lamp of happiness' in the heart of an impoverished child.

Animal antics can be amusing as well as aggravating, as are the kittens in *The Troublesome Four*. The shopkeeper—storyteller has a different tale to tell of his shop in *Mohan Chacha's Violin*. Mannu's decision to let his dog stay in his new home comes after much heartsearching in *Mannu's Pet*.

The reunion of the mother cat and her kitten helps Soma and Pappu's mother decide the fate of the little creature in Candy Comes Home. The tiger cub in Remembering Jack grows up among humans but cannot

change its feline ways. Spring tide and pollution together cause The Sapphire Lake to be called cursed. Namita learns the importance of making the first move in order to win friends in The First Day. 'Rich' does not necessarily mean 'happy' is Anju's realisation in Rich Like Them. The agony of a child torn between love for her mother and her father who are separated, is real in The Red Maruti.

It is well known that illustrations play an important role in any children's book. Not only must they be correct in

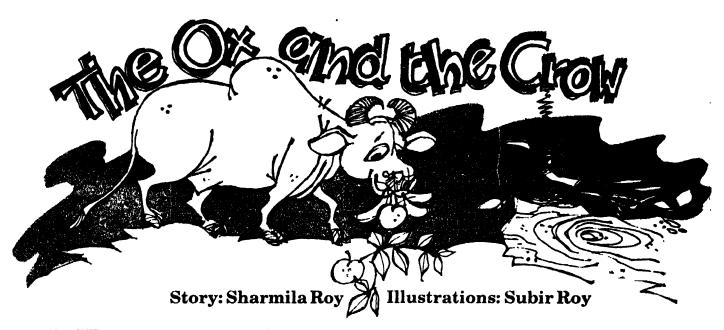
every detail and vibrant. they must also bring to life for the reader, the characters and situations described in the book. In this respect the illustrations of both A Dog Named Rocky and Other Stories and The Belling of Balu and Other Stories leave a lot to be desired. Surely our young readers deserve better. When so much of effort is being expended by writers to reach quality literature to children, why is such an effort not made by illustrators of children's books?

Bhavana Nair

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Information & Publications Dept: Calcutta Municipal Corporation.



Timmy crow were the best of friends. Perched on Neel's back,
Timmy would travel along the road giving the hump on the ox's back, a friendly peck or two.

In return for the joy ride that he enjoyed on Neel's back, Timmy would fly here and there and inform Neel of suitable spots where fresh vegetation was available, that Neel could feed on.

Days passed into months in this way. One day, however, due to lack of rainfall the ponds dried up and animals died.

Neel decided to leave the village as the vegetation had died. Timmy, who could have stayed back and fed on the carcasses of dead animals, also decided to leave because his friend was doing so.

Perched on Neel's back.

the two friends left for the next village. There was greenery all round the place. Gradually the two came to the middle of the village where there was a Shiva temple. The two friends saw a lot of people with travs laden with fruits and jugs of milk going into the temple. Suddenly a lady saw Neel, and without hesitation came towards him and placed some fruits in front of him. Since it was a Shiva temple and the ox is Lord Shiv's vehicle. devotees thought Neel to be sacred too. Neel, at first couldn't believe his eyes, but later when he understood the situation he happily munched at the fruits and lapped up the milk that another devotee had placed before him.

Seeing the juicy papayas and guavas Timmy wanted to dig his beak

into it but as he flew down from Neel's back and landed near the fruits, the lady, who had placed the fruits first in front of Neel picked up a stone and threw it at him. Timmy flew away to a nearby tree and sat there watching Neel feeding. Other devotees in the meantime, following the lady's action, had also placed some offering or the other in front of him. Timmy, hungry and thirsty, made another attempt to share Neel's food. This time a devotee did not throw a stone but picked up a stick and hit Timmy hard on the head. Yelping with pain. Timmy flew back to the tree and watched, in shocked silence as Neel ate all the food himself. He did not even notice that Timmy had been hit on the head.

Thus the practice

continued. Every day the devotees would visit the Shiva temple and while returning offer Neel fruits and milk. On Monday the number of devotees was more. Timmy who watched all the activities from a tree, was surprised to see the change of behaviour in his friend. For not only did Neel refuse to talk to him, he even looked insulted if the crow came near him. Timmy felt sad, 'After all I left the village only to be with him', he thought. 'I could have fed on the carcasses in the village if I had stayed back'.

Time progressed. One day however the Panchayat took the decision to demolish all unauthorised structures to make way for the construction of a new road to the village. The Panchayat removed the image of Lord Shiva and installed it in a temple built in the courtvard of the house of one of the Panchayat members. The temple was naturally demolished, since the idol had been removed.

As a result devotees stopped coming. Neel waited for days on end for them but nobody came. Days turned into weeks. 'Serves him right', Timmy thought happily to him-

self at first. But as the days passed, Neel started to become sick; a huge boil formed on his hump. Neel couldn't move because of the pain and starvation. Timmy took pity on his friend. The first ripe mango that landed in front of Neel was brought by Timmy. Overcome with gratitude

friend. The boil on Neel's hump burst. Gradually Neel recovered.

Neel had learnt his lesson. He would never be selfish and mean again, nor would he ignore his friend. The villagers were surprised to see an ox and a crow moving about the village, happily talking to each other.





The mentally retarded girl on the television

Playing on the sand

Made me make a resolution

To lend the mentally retarded a helping
hand

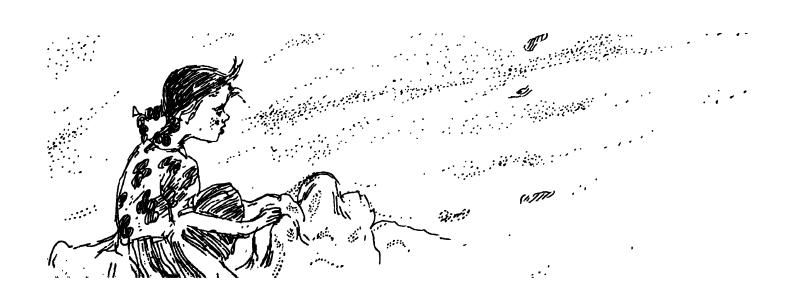
The face may be the same
But bears no hatred or greed
Go deeper into the picture
For there is more than we can see
With a faraway look in her eyes
With an innocent face
She said nothing, when she was ridiculed
And called a disgrace.
Her mind was blank as a clean slate
She neither knew love nor hate
To be born mentally retarded was her only
affliction

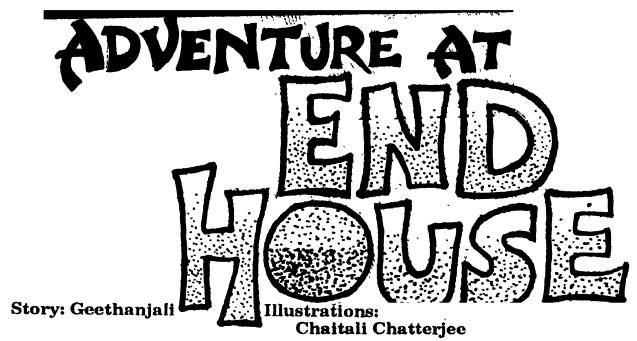
Her mind was always in a state of confusion.

She knew not how to write and read When others ridiculed her, it made her heart bleed

She never had a friend
Because of her state of mind.
Give the mentally retarded your love and

Do all you can for their welfare.





Snapper is sent away

Part V

Manisha, Sheetal, Vivek and Siddharth grow very fond of Miss Daisy, the new occupant of End House. Anita, Miss Daisy's cousin, comes to End House to meet Marie, her sister, who is expected there to collect her mother's jewellery. The children's efforts to track down Shiela, Anita's twin, who attempts to steal the jewellery, ends in vain. Snapper, Miss Daisy's dog, is given one last chance to behave.

HE hunt was on for Snapper. The children ran in all directions searching for him. Miss Daisy came running out. She was close to tears as she called out to her dog. Anita came walking up the lane just then. She was dismayed when she heard that Snapper had run off.

"He was chained, was n't he? How did he manage to break loose?" she as ked.

Miss: Daisy threw up her hands. "I don't know. I only wish that the children find him before he gets: up to mischief."

Strepper was at last run

to earth in Aunt Maya's garden. Vivek and Siddharth dashed off to Aunt Maya's house to find Snapper growling at a terrified Titan. "Aunt Daisy, he is here! Call him," Vivek yelled.

Miss Daisy hurried over to Aunt Maya's house. "Come here, Snapper," she said sternly. Snapper hesitated and then came bounding up to her. She caught him by the collar and said, "Come home."

Snapper went meekly enough. Everyone sighed with relief.

Then suddenly something happened. Aunt Maya's young nephew, Ashok, who had come to spend his holidays with his aunt, came running up Gandhi Lane. Snapper sensing that he was a stranger, sprang to action. He shot out of Miss Daisy's grasp and ran.

"Watch out! Snapper is coming," Manisha warned Ashok when she finally found her voice.

Ashok was not aware of Snapper's reputation but the sight of the black dog running towards him gave him the fright of his life. He ran as though the devil was at his heels. Snapper followed, raising a cloud of dust. The children and Miss Daisy

watched paralysed with fear for Ashok. Desperation gave Ashok strength. In a trice he leapt onto the wall of his aunt's house. He just managed to snatch his legs away from Snapper's teeth. The wall was not very high and it looked as though Snapper would bite Ashok. Ashok stood dancing on the wall trying to protect his legs from Snapper's snapping teeth.

As usual everyone in Gandhi Lane came out, hearing all the noise. Grandmother shouted urgently, "Someone catch the dog."

Mr. Mahadev went inside to hunt for a nice, long stick. The doctor snorted angrily. Aunt Maya burst into tears.

"Ashok," the doctor shouted, "Make a dash for it. That dog will bite your legs off. Miss Daisy, distract that dog of yours."

Miss Daisy who had been watching everything dumbly, now called out to Snapper.

The dog took no notice of her. Siddharth disappeared inside his house and brought out a large bone. "Here boy, here Snapper, come and get this," he tempted the dog. Snapper turned for a second. Ashok jumped into

Aunt Maya's garden. All would have gone well if he had not fallen as he leapt down. He recovered in a moment but the damage had been done. Snapper heard the sound and turned back. In a flash he leapt over the fence. It was a race between boy and dog, as Ashok rushed inside. "Close the door, Aunty," he screamed.

His aunt in her nervousness, fumbled with the door. She was a second too late in shutting it. That second was enough for Snapper. He pushed himself inside. Aunt Maya stoutly tried to push him away but she jumped back when snarling white teeth snapped at her fingers.

Dr. Ray swore under his breath. Aunt Maya was having hysterics now. Miss Daisy looked as though she would faint. Mr. Mahadev came out with a big black belt and a sturdy stick. While Grandmother tried to comfort a hysterical Aunt Maya who had come running out of her house in fear, the doctor and Mr. Mahadev went inside to help Ashok. Vivek and Siddharth also crept in cautiously. They found that Ashok had managed to climb up to the loft where he stayed put while Snapper kept

guard below. He waved a cheerful hand to reassure them, "Don't worry. I'm quite safe up here."

It took the combined efforts of the doctor and Mr. Mahadev to tie the belt around Snapper's collar. They dragged him away to Miss Daisy's shed and locked him up. They then came back to the group assembled in the lane. "I am afraid this is it. We gave Snapper a chance and he has lost it. He has to go."

Ashok clambered down from the loft, none the worse for his adventure. He put an arm round his tearful aunt, "Never mind. Cheer up, Aunty. I am still in one piece as you can see! I always thought this area was too dull for words. Snapper has made me change my mind."

Mr. Mahadev wiped his brow, "I am going to ring up the dog van," he said firmly.

The children looked at each other in shock. Miss Daisy bit her lips but said nothing. Then Anita spoke up, "You don't have to call the dog van. I shall take Snapper to a friend of mine. She lives miles away from this place. Her house is remote and isolated and Snapper is not likely to harm any-

one." She put a comforting arm round Miss Daisy.

Dr. Ray looked relieved. "That's settled then. Miss Daisy, I am sorry but I am sure that you realise by now that Snapper has to go."

Anita led Miss Daisy inside End House. "Don't you worry, Daisy. My friend is a dog lover. She will look after Snapper well."

The children met in Sheetal's house. They felt that Miss Daisy needed to be left alone just then. "How did Snapper get loose?" Vivek demanded.

Sheetal said excitedly, "I heard Anita ask Aunt Daisy about it. Anita had

gone for a walk. Aunt Daisy was working in her kitchen when she received a phone call. Do you know who the caller was?"

"No, who was it?" Siddharth asked impatiently.

Sheetal had the air of one imparting important knowledge. "Shiela!" she said triumphantly. "She kept Aunt Daisy talking. Aunt Daisy suddenly heard Snapper barking. She ran to the veranda to find Snapper running away."

Vivek looked thoughtful. "It sure looks as though Shiela deliberately rang Miss Daisy up to keep her engaged while an accomplice set Snapper free."

"But why should she do that?" Manisha wanted to know. "What does she have to gain by that?"

"Lots," Vivek declared. "She must be aware of the ultimatum that the doctor and Mr. Mahadev issued—that Snapper would have to leave the next time he misbehaved. Shiela must have set him free so that he would get up to mischief and be sent away. If she is the paying guest in Mr. Mahadev's house, she will be aware of all this. Snapper is a good watch dog. Maybe she wanted him out of the way so that the field



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would be clear for her to try and get the jewels."

"The jewels are in the locker," Sheetal reminded them.

Siddharth looked excited, "Yes but Miss Daisy's cousin, Marie, will be coming to End House the day after tomorrow. Aunt Daisy will certainly take the jewels out of the locker to hand them over to her. I bet Shiela will try to steal the jewels then."

"I believe you are right," Manisha said slowly. "How horrid of her to try to get rid of Snapper like that. Do you think we ought to warn Aunt Daisy?"

Vivek shook his head "No, for one thing, we are not sure that we are right. For another, Aunt Daisy is so upset that she probably won't even listen to us."

Sheetal looked at Manisha, "Let us go back to Mr. Mahadev's house. Surely the paying guest will be back by now. If she is Shiela, we can be sure that all our ideas are right."

"I forgot all about that," Manisha declared. "Come on Sheetal." The two girls went over to Mr.

Mahadev's house again.

"I only hope he doesn't get mad at us," Sheetal whispered. Manisha

squared her shoulders and pressed the bell.

It was Mrs. Mahadev who answered the door this time. The permanent frown on her face deepened when she saw the girls. "Well? What do you want?" she barked.

"Er-Aunty, we had come earlier this evening to ask for a contribution for a Home-for-the-Aged. Uncle said that we could come again to meet your paying guest. He said she would surely contribute. Do you think that we could meet her now?"

"No, she has not yet come," Mrs. Mahadev said shortly, "and let me tell you, she is a very busy person. I don't think she



will enjoy being pestered by you girls."

Manisha and Sheetal could do nothing but turn to leave. Just then the gate opened and a young lady entered. She had a pile of notebooks in her hands and the children guessed at once that she was a school teacher. The lady smiled at the girls. "Hullo, Mrs. Mahadev, who are these pretty girls? Are they relatives of yours?"

"No," Mrs. Mahadev denied grumpily, "they are neighbours. Actually they came to see you."

"To see me?" the lady asked surprised. "What can I do for you, girls?" Manisha was so surprised to find that this lady was the paying guest that she could only stare. So they had been wrong! The paying guest was not Shiela.

Sheetal gave her a sharp nudge. Manisha collected her wits and explained the cause for the collection. She hardly noticed the handsome contribution the smiling lady made. It was Sheetal who rose to the occasion and thanked the lady prettily.

"We were wrong, Vivek. The paying guest is not Shiela," Manisha told Vivek as soon as they got home. "So where does that leave us? Where is Shiela staying? If she is not staying nearby how did she know of the right time to break into End House? How did she know about the decision that Snapper would have to leave if he misbehaved again?"

Vivek looked thoughtful, "I'm afraid I don't know the answer to your questions Manisha. Maybe she is staying in a lodge nearby or something."

"Looking for Shiela is like looking for a needle in a haystack," Sheetal said. "Let's go to End House tomorrow. It was jolly sporting of Anita to come to Snapper's rescue, wasn't it? At least now Aunt Daisy knows that he will be in good hands."

When the children reached End House the next day, they were taken aback to see Anita leading Snapper to a waiting car. Miss Daisy followed them. She knelt down by the gate and gently stroked Snapper's head. "Goodbye old boy. One day, you will come back to me. I feel it in my bones." Snapper put back his ears and looked up at her, his tail wagging furiously.

"Come along, Snapper! Let's go for a ride," Anita called out. Snapper bounded along happily enough.

"He thinks she is just taking him for a ride," Manisha whispered. Sheetal saw Miss Daisy's, downcast face and ran over to her. She flung her arms around Miss Daisy, who smiled back at her.

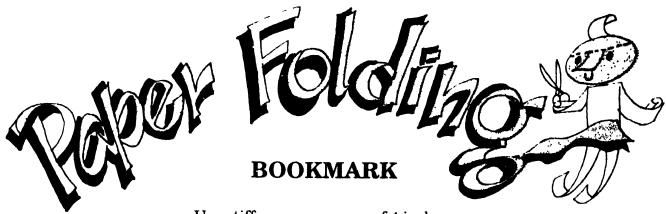
"Bye, Daisy," Anita called out. "Don't you worry about Snapper. He will be all right. I shall come back this evening."

Miss Daisy raised a hand in farewell. The children watched wordlessly as the car went out of sight. "I suppose that's the last we have seen of Snapper! Poor fellow! He was snappy and surly, but somehow End House won't be the same without him," Siddharth said.

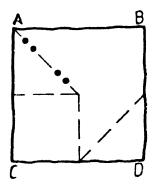
Manisha, Sheetal and Vivek could only nod their heads. Like Siddharth they couldn't help feeling that End House would not be the same without Snapper.

To be continued

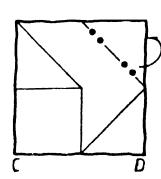




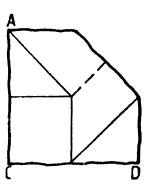
Use stiff paper, a square of 4 inches



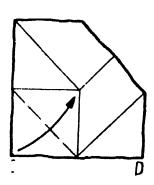
1. Pre-crease as shown.



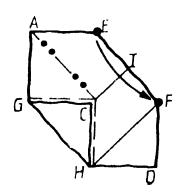
2. Fold corner B behind, into the middle.



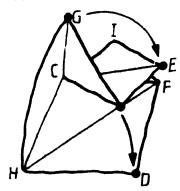
3. Pre-crease the short diagonal.



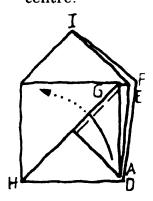
4. Fold corner C to the centre.



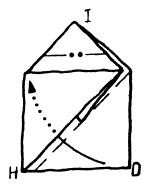
5. Collapse all the creases as shown, folding E to F.



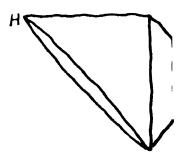
6. Collapse further, folding A to D and G to E and F.



7. The folded paper now looks like this. Tuck A right up into the triangle.



8. Fold I inwards. Tuck D right up into the triangle on top of A.



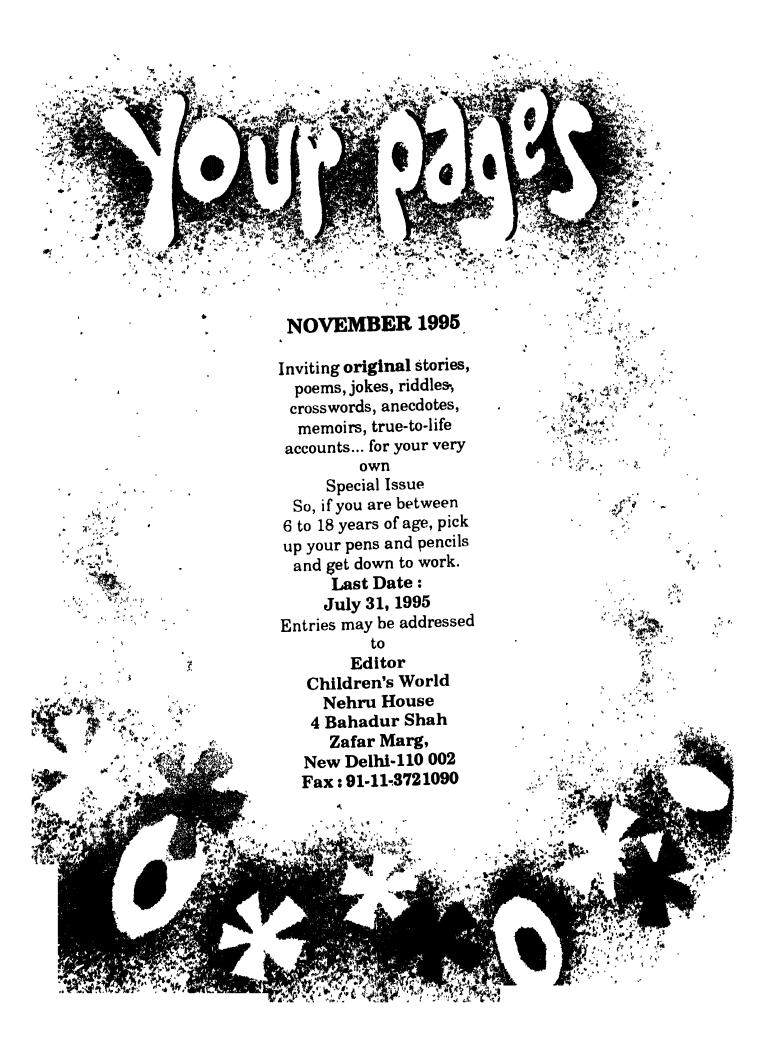
9. The pocket of your bookmark will slip over the corner of your book.

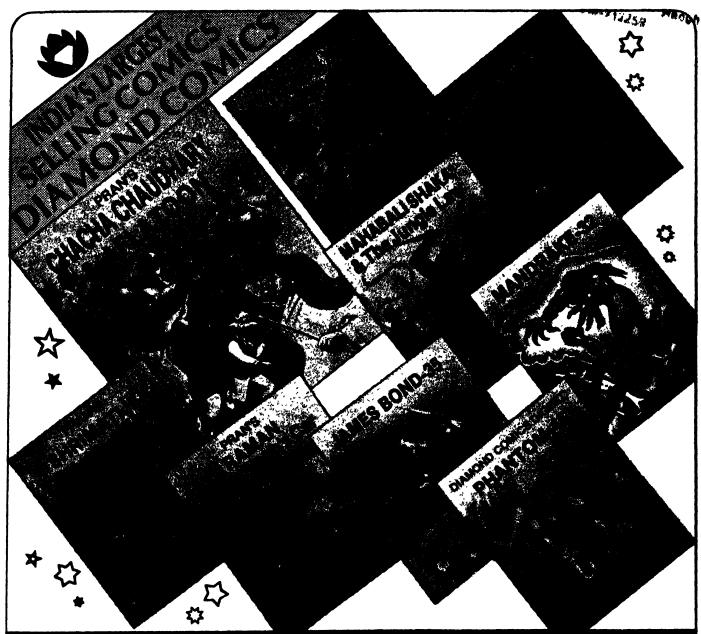




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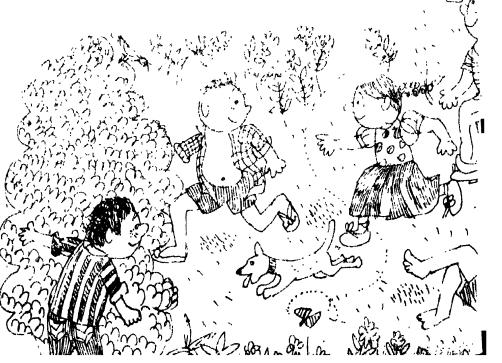
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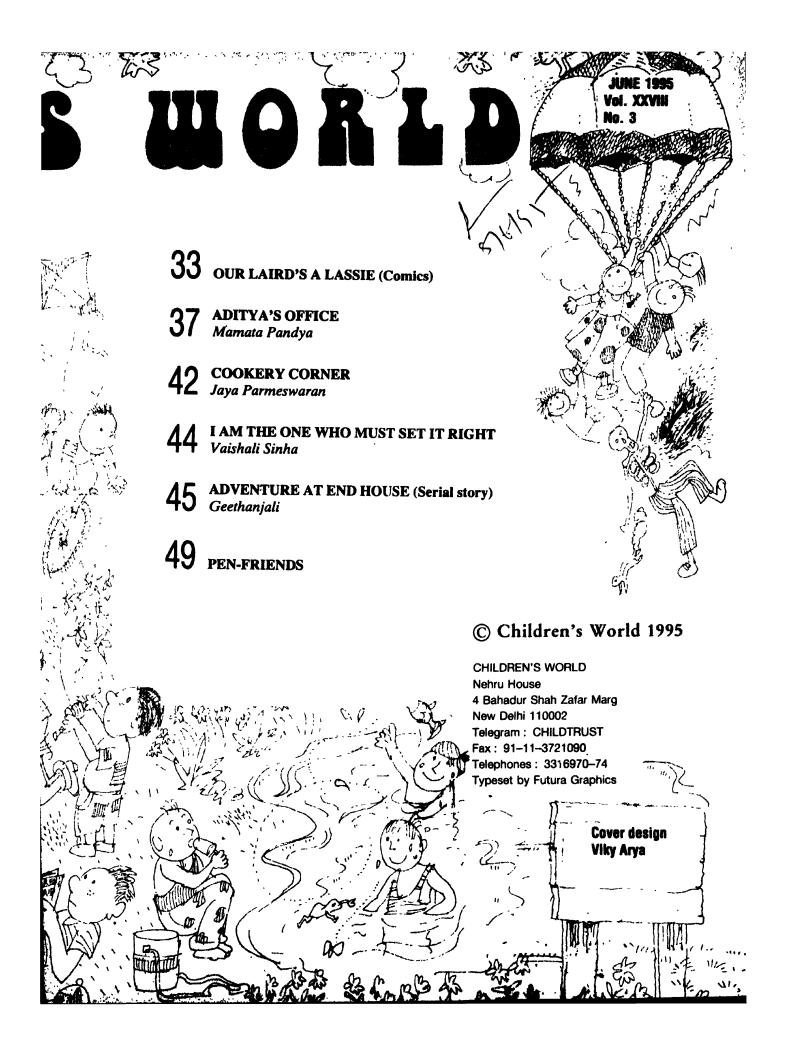
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... Dear Readers

In childhood, monsoon meant the appearance of the red velvet mite, which, like its name, was a tiny cushion of red velvet with legs to match. For one who did not care much for God's other creatures of the insect variety, I displayed a marked tenderness for the red velvet. Out, would come matchboxes, complete with holes on the lid and cotton lining inside (as though they cared for such comfort!) and in, would go the red velvet. The next day this one would go back into the wilds and another one would be found to take its place, to be proudly displayed in school ... until with the last shower, the red velvet too would mysteriously disappear.

Alas, childhood was left behind in the lush forests of Madhya Pradesh. But the hunt for the red velvet during the monsoon was relentlessly carried on.
Till at last in 1990, on the outskirts of Delhi, I found one red velvet, only it was a sickly orange. Tenderly it was picked up and carefully released into our own concrete jungle garden, in the hope that it would multiply and reappear every year. Sad to say, but that has not happened—yet.

However, the red velvet mite for me, has become the symbol of the intense bonding with Nature in those innocent and carefree days. The search for one little insect opened up a whole world of trees. flowers, leaves, stems, roots, thorns, fragrances, odours, creepy creatures, birds, snails and earthworms. So much so, that now, unless those sensations of scratch, itch, smell and creepiness steal upon me periodically, I can hardly feel 'alive'. And time and again I gratefully acknowledge this vast treasure that grandparents and parents so graciously and persistently opened up for me.

Trees, the shapes of leaves, flowers, their fragrances, their sizes in relation to the plant or tree, their seasons ... were it not for the plentitude of time and innocent acceptance of childhood, I would be that much the poorer today.

Perhaps that is why the environment is endangered now. Man's instinctive bond with Nature is becoming extinct. Today's grandparents are 'good sports', they join in our computer games and enjoy video films with us. But how many of us have the foresight to learn from them, what only they know?

For this issue, to mark the World Environment Day on June 5, we bring you stories of such unique bonds with Nature, that the authors have known in their own childhood or in that of their children...

Stories that touch a chord and motivate you into seeking 'one' for yourself...

Happy reading and sincere bonding.



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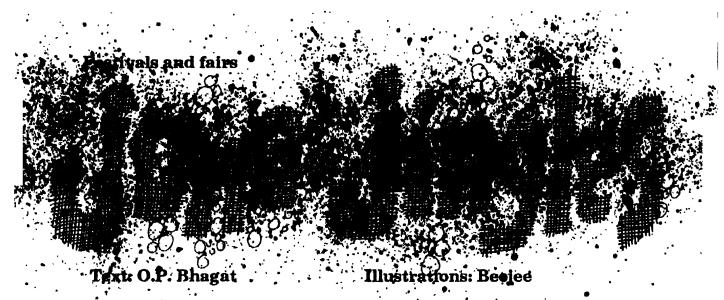
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OU may call June a hotter May. For, with the month, the mercury already horribly high, begins to rise higher.

June 21 is the longest day of the year. It may not be the hottest. Yet the thought of it may give you the jitters.

June and jitters often go together. Can there be festive days in such a month? Well, June is not all heat and hot winds. It has its joys too.

By the way, the month gets its name from Juno, wife of Jupiter, chief of the Roman gods. Juno was also the goddess of marriage.

In the West, even now, June marriages are considered lucky. "Many girls dream of being not just a bride, but a June bride."

The northern plains of India do sizzle in the heat of June. But the Himalayan region is cool. Higher

up it is cold, with most of the peaks covered with snow.

In the south of the country, the picture is different. Around the first of June the monsoon comes to Kerala. And it moves northward. With the rains, the summer scenario changes.

The summer in Europe is cooler. The feeling of joy that comes there with the Spring continues in June. The month is all bright and green.

Midsummer's Day— June 24—was once a festive occasion. The people made bonfires and had lots of fun. Now many of the old customs are mere memories.

But new enjoyments are there. And games and adventure sports. Beaches and holiday resorts are crowded.

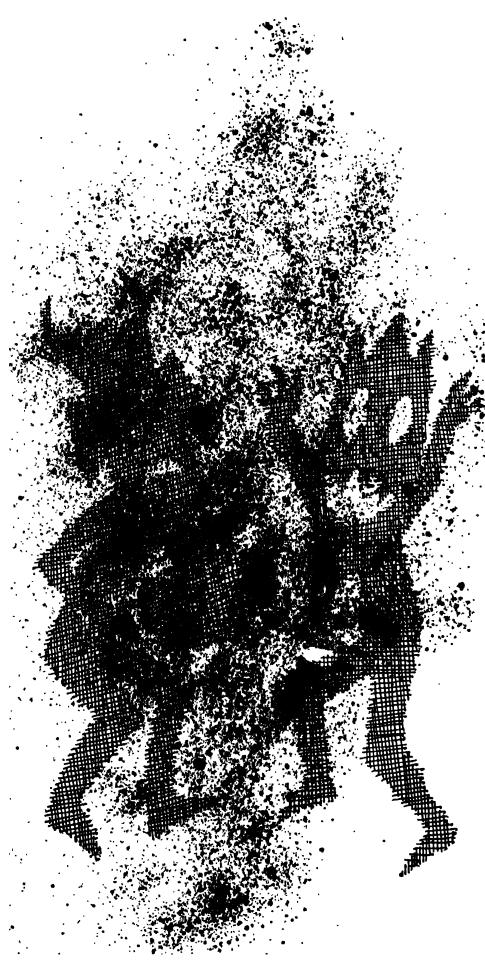
Have you read Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream? The action of the play takes place on a moonlit night in June. And what fun both men and fairies have in a lovely summer wood.

Lovely like that wood are our wooded hills and valleys. That is why most of our summer holidaymakers go to the hill stations.

Many of these places are in the Himalayas. The others are scattered all over the country. Ooty, for example, is in the Nilgiris.

Some visitors are content with being away from their hot, sweaty towns. But the others enjoy themselves in so many ways. They go riding, rowing, fishing, trekking and climbing.

Rajasthan has just one hill resort—Mt Abu. With rocks, lakes and thickets, it has much natural beauty. Temples are its other attraction. Both tourists and pilgrims go there.



Mt Abu holds a summer festival in June. It is a feast of music, dance, colour and all that Rajasthan is famous for.

Colourful in its own way is the Hemis festival in the Ladakh part of Kashmir. Hemis is the biggest monastery in the region. The festival, in June, is in horiour of Guru Fadmasambhava.

Masked dancers stage a battle between good spirits and demons. The spand of pipes, drums and cymbals adds to the dramatic effect. The celebrations go on for three days.

At the same time, a fair is held nearby. On display are beads, silver jewellery, semi-precious stones and handicrafts.

For many people summertime is pilgrimage time. The devout go to the holy places in the hills. The shrine of Vaishno Devi, near Jammu, draws thousands of people. So do several shrines in Himachal.

No doubt this goes on in all months. But summer holidays lend a new interest or energy to it.

The Badrinath shrine, high up in the Himalayas, is closed during the cold months. It opens again in June. And it is a big draw.

Not far from there is

another holy place, Kedarnath. It is also a 'must' with many pilgrims. Yet others, as also some adventurers, go to Yamnotri (source of the Yamuna) and Gangotri (source of the Ganga).

June is Ganga Puja time too. The devout worship the river on its birthday. That is, the day it descended to the earth.

Originally, the Ganga flowed in heaven, says a legend. But the penance and prayer of a king made it come to our world.

The king was
Bhagiratha. He needed
the holy touch of the river
for the ashes of his ancestors. They had been burnt
by the fire of a rishi's
wrath.

You know what the force of a mighty river is. The Ganga could have caused havoc by hitting the earth. But the great god, Shiva, received it on his long, matted hair. This is why he is called Gangadhar—in whom the Ganga originates.

Ever since then the Ganga has been the most sacred river of India. The Hindus believe that a bath in its waters cleanses a person of all his or her sins. They go for a holy dip at Hardwar, Banaras, Prayag (Allahabad) or wherever the river flows.

The story of the descent of the Ganga is an epic of its own kind. Do read it in detail when you can.

We are back in the plains. It is hot very hot; some parts of the country may be in the grip of a heat wave. But the June joys try to make up for it.

In fact, our hot summer as a whole has a nicer side. It offers more fruits than any other season. There are melons, watermelons and mangoes. Also plums, peaches, apricots, cherries, litchis and jamuns.

Then there are so many cool drinks. As an advertisement says, it is fun to be thirsty. Add to these ice-creams in all flavours.

Clubs and other swimming pools are also crowded. Some people invite their friends for a feast of mangoes and other summer delicacies.

Many people go to the nearby rivers for a swim. At places it is like a bathing fair every evening.

But in June, the Hindus also have Nirjala Ekadashi. On this day the pious fast. They do not even drink water then.

Legend links the day with Bhima. As you know, the second of the Pandavas was a great eater. He even ate on Ekadashi or the 11th day of the month, when he was expected to keep a fast.

Now fasting is meant to purify one's body as well as soul. So his mentors made Bhima fast at least once a year. The day fixed was Nirjala Ekadashi, when drinking water too, is forbidden.

However, the day is not as hard as it seems. The pious do fast, but the rites of the day make them forget all the rigour. They think of their forefathers. In their memory they give clay jars, hand-fans and fruit to the priests.

In temples and other places sherbet or sweet drink is offered to passersby all day long.

In June falls the martyrdom day of Guru Arjun. Sherbet is offered to everybody at gurdwaras and along the roads.

On a hot day nothing is so welcome as a shady spot to rest and cool water to drink. If the summer is hot and long, shade and water are needed all the more.

For the benefit of travellers, good kings planted trees and dug wells along the roads.



Some rich men too made arrangements for serving water on the wayside.

Offering water to the thirsty was no mere courtesy. It was considered a good deed. To this day many persons set up piayos, stalls where water is offered to whoever comes.

Similarly, sherbet is not just sweet. It also begets sweetness in the hearts.

June has yet another big day. It is the Rath Yatra or the car festival of Puri.

Puri, in Orissa, is famed for its Jagannath temple. Jagannath means Lord of the Universe. It is one of the many names of Vishnu.

Vishnu is represented in Puri as Krishna. Apart from Krishna, images of his brother, Balarama, and sister, Subhadra, are also there.

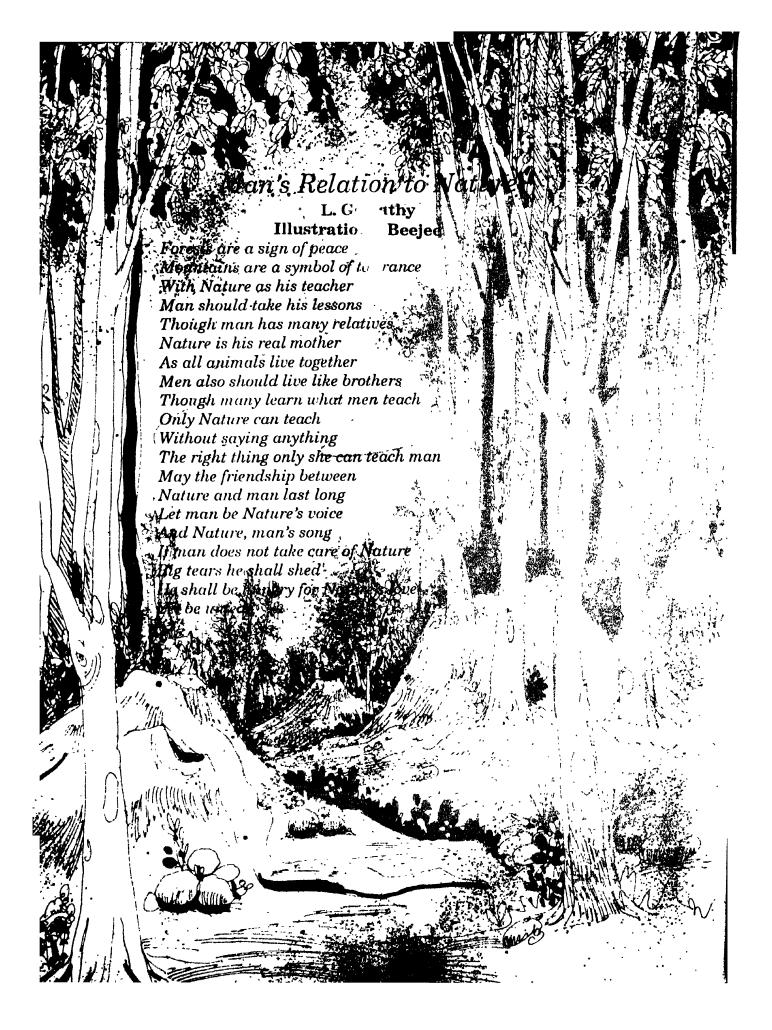
But the large, wooden idols look unfinished. A legend explains this. A king begged Vishwakarma, architect of the gods, to craft the images for the temple.

Vishwakarma said that he would. But while he was working, he should not be disturbed in any way. The king agreed. However, curiosity made him peep into the room where the divine artist was chipping a log of wood into three forms.

At this Vishwakarma left at once. So the idols were installed in the temple as they were.

On the day of the Yatra these images are placed on three chariots of immense size. Devotees pull the chariots to a house some distance away. After three days the images are brought back to the temple...

What is that noise? Rejoice...it is the monsoon, rumbling in the skies...





Rohit had suddenly felt a wild desire to rush out and jump about in the rain.

But *Dadu* had stopped him on his way to the front door. "How can you think of going out in this rain? You'll catch a cold!"

"Oh, I won't, Dadu, I promise I won't," said Rohit.

"You know you catch a cold so easily—and the last time you got wet in the rain, remember how cross your Mummy was?"

"Oh, Dadu, she's out with Daddy, and won't even know unless you tell her yourself."

"That's not the point," said *Dadu* sternly. "No, no, just come up and sit with me in the library."

There was a little room upstairs that Dadu and Rohit shared. It housed books of all sorts, a loving collection built up over the years. Normally Rohit loved to be there, sitting on his low stool, with Dadu on the easy-chair. both absorbed in their books. But today he felt different. The soft, grey skies, the cool, wet breeze, and the fresh-smelling earth outside—he wanted to be a part of them. But he had to trudge upstairs after Dadu.

"Today, I'll read you

portions out of some Bengali classics," said Dadu.

Born and brought up outside Bengal, Rohit was not very well-read in Bengali, even though it was his mother tongue. Of late, *Dadu* was trying to make him read some Bengali books.

"Later on, you must read them on your own," continued *Dadu*.

"Oh, all right," said
Rohit, his eyes on the
glistening leaves of the
creeper that reached up to
the window and trembled
against the windowpanes! Then he added:
"But, Dadu, let me pick
the books you will read
out."

"But you won't know the right books to choose!"

"That's just it, Dadu!
I'll pick them up at random. Neither of us will know beforehand what the book will be all about and it'll be more fun that way."

Dadu agreed.

Rohit went up to the shelf that contained Bengali books and pulled one out.

"Let me see what this is," said Dadu. "A-ha! Kapalakundala by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya." He lowered himself into the

easy-chair, while Rohit settled down on his stool.

"Kapalakundala was an abandoned waif brought up by a hermit in a secluded forest in the delta region of the Ganga. She grew up among the bushes and sand dunes, walking about all by herself on the sea-shore. Later. Navakumar, a young man stranded on those shores, married her and brought her to the mainland. But Kapalakundala could never really fit into the confines of her new home. She still yearned for the environment she had left behind—the wilderness and the freedom. What is it that can make you. happy?' her sister-in-law had once asked her.

"'Perhaps roaming about on those sandy shores...' she had answered.

"You see, Rohit, in spite of husband and home, clothes and jewellery, she still longed for the feel of wet sand between her toes and the salty breeze upon her face..."

Suddenly, *Dadu* stopped and put the book away. "Get something else," he commanded.

This time it was a volume of Sharat-Sahitya-Samgraha that Rohit chanced to take out.

"Srikanta—First Part—Well, Rohit, this classic by Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyaya begins with the story of Srikanta. As a schoolboy, he made friends with Indranath, a drop-out from school..."

"What sort of a boy was Indranath?" asked Rohit.

"Essentially, an outdoor type. His was a family of zamindars (landlords). But he himself was a wild creature—an untamed spirit. He had a little boat, which he plied on the Ganga, rain or shine, day and night. Along banks of sand and silt, through fields of makka, bhutta and jawar (Indian corn and maize), in the dark of jhau (tamarisk, a type of

coniferous tree). Sometimes, he did some fishing, but mostly it was just the feel of water and wind that drew him to that life..." Dadu broke off again. "Perhaps we'd better look at something else."

Outside, the rain glistened like skeins of silver upon the multicoloured spread of the garden. Eyes upon the window, Rohit got up and fetched another book.

"Galpaguchha by
Rabindranath Tagore. Ah,
let's see which story it
opens at," said Dadu.
"Hmm—'Balai'. Well,
Balai was a motherless
child, very fond of all
things green and growing.

He hated it when the gardener mowed the lawn, because he mowed out the tiny, wild flowers along with the grass. He felt awful when his friends slashed at bushes with their sticks just for the heck of it or threw stones at trees to knock down the fruit. He could not bear the thought of saplings being cut, even when they sprang up right in the middle of the road leading to the house. He loved to walk about on the terrace, bare-bodied in the afternoon sun, to venture out into dark, coniferous forests and stand there in silent wonder, to roll down slopes of grass, laughing all the while..."



Dadu stopped and looked at Rohit, and then at the window. Outside, the sun was beginning to filter out through the clouds.

"Let me get another," said Rohit when *Dadu* fell silent.

It was Pather Panchali
by Bibhutibhushan
Bandopadhyaya that
Rohit happened to bring
Dadu this time.

"You saw the film, remember?" reminded Dadu.

Rohit nodded enthusiastically.

Dadu went on, "Apu belonged to the village Nishchindipur. His childhood days were spent there with his sister, Durga, among groves of am (mango) and clumps of bansh (bamboo). His nights were filled with the moonlight on the narial (coconut) tree in the courtyard and the fragrance of the muchukunda champa (champaka) flowers he picked up in the morning and placed under his pillow."

"What happened afterwards, *Dadu*?" asked Rohit.

"Durga died and the family moved to the city of Benares. Then Apu lost his father, and his mother

had to become a cook in a big house in very ugly surroundings. It was agony for Apu to be away from his environment of green. He pined for the leaves and flowers and bird songs of his village. The book ends with Apu homesick at the thought of the bird that used to flit about their courtyard at Nishchindipur." Dadu paused and added, "This love of nature, this spirit of unity with the environment, you can find it there in the film as well..."

"Yes, yes," said Rohit, "I remember how Apu and Durga were enjoying themselves in the rain. Durga especially. She was getting drenched, but still going round and round with her hair open—in a sort of dance. Of course, she began sneezing soon after, and the next scene is of the doctor examining her..."

Dadu got up. "Come on

Rohit, even at the risk of catching a cold, I think you had better go out into the lawn."

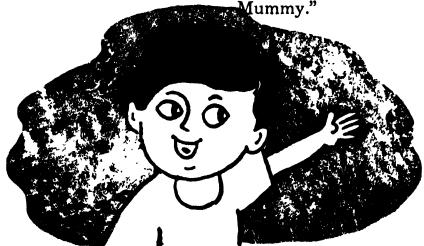
"Oh, really, *Dadu*? May I?" exclaimed Rohit, jumping up.

"Yes, I made a mistake. Those books you chose at random have made me realise it."

Rohit rushed down the stairs. Outside, the rain had thinned, the skies had cleared. The rain-washed world was all aglow. Rohit flung aside his slippers and stepped onto the sparkling grass. His feet sank into the soft, wet clay. What a lovely feel, notwithstanding the crawling earthworms that came up between his toes! Squelch, squelch, he went forward.

There was a squelch behind him. Then another.

"I think I'll join you," said *Dadu* by his side.
"Only, don't tell your



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BHAPUR is a tiny, triba! village in Bhiloda *taluka*. Sabarkantha district. Gujarat. Situated on the spine of the Aravalli range, Abhapur is a cluster of mud huts shrouded by spreading mahua (Madhuca Indica) and peepul (Ficus Religiosa) trees. Each hut has a tiny courtyard swept clean and is enclosed with fences made of dry cornstalks over which creepers thrive luxuriantly. Inside the courtyard, goats and their kids loll about in the gentle warmth of a November morning.

Times have changed for

the goats and cows of Abhapur village. They no longer roam the hills in search of fodder which had, in recent years, become increasingly scarce. They are now stallfed by their owners all year round. This change in the life of the goats and cows flows from a dramatic development in the life of the people of Abhapur four years ago.

In 1984 the Gujarat government introduced a scheme under which forest wastelands began to be offered on a thirty year lease to co-operatives of labourers and small and marginal farmers. And so, in 1989, the villagers of Abhapur got together to form a tree-growers cooperative in order to take up the offer.

The village had traditionally drawn upon the forest areas on the neighouring hills for their fuelwood and fodder. Over the years the hills that were once rich with teak, mahua, neem and ber trees, grew bare.

"There was nothing there four years ago," ruminates Kantaben chewing on the end of her sari, as we sit under the dense crown of an ancient mahua tree. Fifteen other tribal women nod to confirm this. "We had to go looking for firewood

and grass to other forests and often returned with nothing," she said.

"We used to get stoned and abused for our pains," adds Sheelaben. "So we decided to do something about the sorry state of our forests."

The community decided that four people would attend to the protection of their highly degraded forest areas by a rote system. This involved initial altercations with the people of neighbouring villages and as it also happened, with some of Abhapur's own people who resented the changes in the system. For, protecting the forests involved corresponding changes in the lifestyles of the villagers. Cattle and goats were no longer allowed to graze out every day, but were fed within their enclosures. Fuel requirements were additionally met by the introduction of biogas plants made available to them entirely free of cost under the Forest department's financing schemes.

The cutback from the forests which involves the periodic lopping of a part of the regenerated growth yields about two months worth of fuelwood supply per household in Abhapur. This is then supplemented by the use of agricultural

waste, dry leaves and biogas. Over eighty per cent of the households in Abhapur have biogas plants. The slopes of the hills had sufficient root stock of the original teak, sal and timru trees that once grew there. Over successive monsoons, the forests returned to Abhapur.

The success of the forest management experiment in Abhapur was hard won. Although joint forestry management seems a simple and workable solution to forest loss, there is a catch, and it relates to the matter of cooperation. Abhapur is not without its share of internal discord.

The Ninama group of tribals account for approx-

imately half the village population with the Kharadi, Damor, Karap and Bhagora tribals making up the rest. However, tensions have cropped up due to a general resentment of the dominant role played by the Ninama in the cooperative and the view that office bearers of the co-operative were misusing their powers to corner benefits for themselves.

The Abhapur case defines the role of intermediary agencies in developing and sustaining these experiments in resource management and self governance.

Viksat, the Vikram Sarabhai Centre for Development Interaction, played the role of catalyst



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in the forest management experiment in the villages of Abhapur and Malekpur. Dr. Siddharaj Solanki, a local development activist, worked with Viksat on the project. Viksat introduced the concept of local forest management, attended to the paperwork and helped obtain the release of degraded forest land for afforestation.

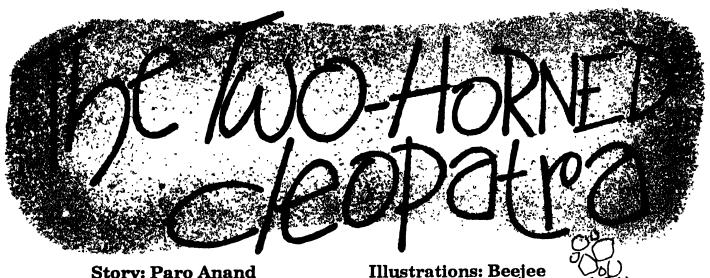
"The fact that the people of Abhapur and Malekpur feel such obvious pride in the regeneration of their forests is something we can draw considerable satisfaction from," says G. Raju, Director, Viksat. But while the Abhapur and Malekpur experiments reinforce our belief in the essential workability of cooperative resource management, they also highlight the need for continued efforts from intermediary organisations to smoothen out tensions and sort out differences that arise from time to time. When villagers sense subversion of the fair operation of co-operatives, they need to try and deal with the problem through small group meetings or regular gram sabhas.

Malekpur, a village of roughly 150 households, lies just a few kilometres

away from Abhapur and the tree-growers cooperative here is not free from community conflict either. Malekpur is dominated by the Kharadi group of tribals who are. as in Abhapur, dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry. Even within the dominant caste group, personality clashes frequently led to conflict situations where any attempt to jointly protect the forests was vehemently opposed. Inter-village disputes occurred over the use of bordering forests. At all these junctures, Viksat had to play a mediatory role to ensure that the process of change continued unobstructed. But fortunately, joint management generates its own dynamics. Once the concept was accepted by the people, they learnt to evolve their own unique ways of dealing with conflict situations. In Malekpur, the co-operative soon learnt to handle the problems of illegal grazing and cutting, by passing orders and resolutions fixing penalties for these offences. The community grew to value their forest resources. "The people have matured in their attitudes to common resource management," says Raju. "They have found a way to resolve their hostilities without taking it out on the forests."

According to Raju, Malekpur has gone a step further than Abhapur in the right direction. The villagers of Malekpur were asked if they needed financial assistance from the Forest department for their afforestation project. But when they realised that this would mean splitting the proceeds of the final harvesting with the Forest department on a fifty-fifty basis, they turned down the offer. Malekpur villagers felt that they would do better to go it on their own. They contributed free labour for tree planting and fencing and will now only need to part with 20 per cent of the final proceeds.

But harvesting the forests is not on their minds right now. They take great and undisguised pride in the slow but sure greening of their hills. And people from neighbouring villages come in droves to visit Abhapur and Malekpur in search of the secret of the returning forests.



Story: Paro Anand

HE day finally dawned. It was Diwali and we were uncontrollably excited, for our parents had promised us gifts of the things we wanted, more than anything else in all the world—animals!

We were called out one by one, age-wise, heightwise. The squeals of my eldest sister, Radha, expressed unmistakable delight and sharpened our impatience. Then it was my brother, Aftab's turn. "Ya-Hoo!!" I heard him as I shot out through the door into the garden, unable to wait any longer.

Radha held a golden puppy lovingly in her arms, and Aftab cuddled a black and white kid—all legs and arms, like him (and the same expression too!).

My parents held out a basket in my direction. **Pee**ping in, I saw the veliest little lamb, all

woolly and cuddly. I picked her up and kissed the softest muzzle. Her wide-spaced, staring, yellow eyes seemed unsure, perhaps even a little

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fri Atened. I put her down gently and she swayed on the green grass, looking as pretty as the proverbial picture. So beautiful, in fact, that she brought

tears into my eyes.

Yes, we had the most wonderful parents. They knew just what we wanted and they got it for us, too! There couldn't have been a more perfect gift for any of us.

Radha named the pup, Tipper. Ostensibly a piedog, she must have been part Labrador, so perfectly golden was she.

The goat trotted about the garden, so sure of himself, as if he owned the place, but nameless for the moment. Nameless, that is, until he made his way to the flower-beds, and then picked on the bed of dhania that grew there, and proceeded to eat it with the greatest relish.

"Dhania!!" we all shouted simultaneously. After that, try as much as Aftab would to change his pet's name to Bubka (after Sergei, the pole-vaulter), Dhania is all the goat was called and, in fact, all he responded to!

The lamb looked around, picture-book style. She was really the most beautiful thing I'd ever set eyes on; so, Cleopatra she had to be, and therein lies the tale (or tail).

The babies, (as we referred to them collectively), though different in

temperament and character, were, luckily for us, the greatest of friends. Or rather, it would be more accurate to say that Tipper and Dhania were as thick as thieves, and they sometimes included Cleopatra in their games. She was actually very quiet, sort of a coy, shy, retiring type. Often I could see that she was dying to play with them. but wouldn't join in unless she was asked. Until then. she would stand in a corner, always partly hidden, her little tail frisking away at her bottom, trying to egg her on. But she just stood there looking at their tumbling games, wearing the most wistful of expressions that I had ever seen.

At such times I would kneel down on the grass and call her out of her hiding place. Her response always came in set stages. First she'd focus her yellow eyes on me and duck her head—sort of setting her sights on me. Once she'd done that, her tail would whisk her bottom in a frenzy. Rather like a bullock-cart driver who whips his animal on. I tend to believe that all her confidence had slipped into her tail and remained lodged there for ever more. Then she'd take a

step out, but retreat instantly. More calling and cajoling would result in another step out—but that's all. If I became at all impatient and stepped forward to pick her out, she'd bolt, and that would be the end of all efforts for the day. So, I had learnt to wait patiently and call some more. "Aa! Aa! Aa!" She would have to muster all her courage to actually leave the last of the foliage and stand trembling on open ground.

Once she was out though, she'd skip quickly into the safety of my shadow and eye me. Those yellow eyes betraying their suspicion of me. It would be another little while before she'd finally allow me to caress her. But when she did, she simply loved it and she'd lose all her mistrust and foreboding. Eventually, she'd be persuaded to join Tipper and Dhania's game. She played, but always held in on herself. never completely at ease. The other two sensed it too and never took liberties with her as they did with each other. Liberties like Tipper pulling at the goat's floppy ears with her sharp puppy teeth. Or Dhania kicking the puppy clean into the air. This excessive boisterousness

back into hiding. But I could see that she secretly admired their ability to give and take so much physically. She longed to try it herself and would gently lower her head and, oh, so gently, butt one of her companions who would scarcely even notice her endeavour.

Dhania was the least discerning of them all. He was hardly Aftab's pet really. So happy to be called, fed, cuddled and fussed by everyone in the house and anybody who visited. He'd eat any rubbish that came his way, and relished peels and scraps and table leftovers so much that we had to start locking the garbage pail which stood outside the kitchen. It was a ridiculous procedure, of course, but better than having the garbage strewn all over the place. And infinitely better than having a goat throwing up in any corner when he had consumed something so obnoxious that it defied even his cast-iron digestive system. But he was so popular because of his utterly forthcoming temperament.

The only person who disliked the enthusiastic Dhania, was, needless to say, the *mali*, Budh



Singh, whose efforts at gardening were ruined by the goat's uninterrupted plundering. Dhania's favourite person was, however, needless to say, the mali, Budh Singh. The animal was sure that there was a person whose sole purpose of existence was to provide a veritable feast everyday.

"Maa! Maa!" Dhania would greet Budh Singh, "Maa! Maa!" and rush up to nuzzle his hands, to smell the heavenly scents of damp earth and freshly cut greenery that lingered about his wonderful personage.

"Hey Bhagwan!" he'd mutter as he crossly pushed the persistent creature away from him, "Agar ek din maine tere tikke kabab nahin banae, to mera naam bhi Budh Singh nahin! (Oh God, if I do not make kababs (cutlets) out of you one day, my name won't continue to be Budh Singh)." But Dhania would only 'Maa!' some more and follow his movements dotingly, often eating a plant even as Budh Singh was about to put it into the ground! The garden became a mere euphemism, in no time, and Budh Singh threatened to resign.

Obviously, something

had to be done. A shelter was duly constructed. It was really a pen made with an assortment of stakes wired together and planted into the ground, and with a wooden gate. It wasn't beautiful, but it served its purpose. Now that they were no longer free to move around, we had to take the three babies on leashes for walks. Of course, Cleopatra was far too beautiful and delicate for an ignoble dog leash, so she had a beautiful, pink, satin ribbon.

Tipper was tall and nimble and spent her time wandering about freely. She could leap in and out of the shelter at will. She was definitely part Labrador by the way she wagged her tail and welcomed strangers, showing them the way into the drawing room or worse, even our bedrooms! Her redeeming feature was a heavy, throaty bark which kept those who did not know her welcoming nature, at bay. Her long, feathery tail would enthusiastically sweep all objects off the low-lying tables and send them crashing to the floor with shattering results. That was a problem that was easily solved. Her chewing up furniture legs was not.

There was little one could do about it until her teeth grew out and settled comfortably in her mouth. The goat and lamb were showing signs of healthy progress too. The tops of their heads were turning itchy and restless as the horns that lurked on their crowns became impatient to be let out. Dhania would roughly rub his head against anything that came in front of him. but, as usual, Cleopatra was more delicate and lady-like about her toilet.

In fact, the most delicate, discerning and decent of them all was my Cleopatra. She ate timidly and neatly. She never 'went for things' and she didn't appreciate any untoward attention, especially of the boisterous kind. You may have noticed that while I've told you about Tipper's hefty bark and Dhania's maaing, I've said nothing of Cleopatra's basing and this is because she was as quiet as, well, a mouse! We never heard so much as one bleat out of her.

It was as if she were afraid of giving away some precious secret that she held dearly to herself. She was aloof, and had a proud bearing which did her name full justice. Ah!

her name! She did full justice to her name, until...

The babies were growning up now and filling of Dhania's legs didn't spen so gangly now. They spri of fell into shape (and silve with the rest of his body. And Tipper's tail wasn't quite so swishy anymore.

But the one who gave us the biggest shock of all was the young, rapidly growing Cleopatra. For, of all the quirkier quirks of fate, my lamb grew up to? be a ... well ... a ram! And a hefty, horned one to boot! She (or rather now—he) looked pretty ridiculous answering to the name Cleopatra. It was too late to change the name completely, so, I simply abbreviated it to Leo. However, he wouldn't respond to that, so we compromised and settled on Cleo!

Cleo's shy, delicate timidity was steadily vanishing and beginning to give way to a new haughtiness accompanied by disturbingly burgeoning strength. And he became more selective about his preferences, especially when it came to people.

The first indication of this dine when, one



morning, Budh Singh went into the shelter to greet the two. He patted Dhania playfully and teased him about the goodies he had brought with him that Dhania would be deprived of because of the pen. Then he went to do the same to Cleo.

"BAA!" went Cleo.
Short. Abrupt. Husky.
Remember, he had always
been completely silent.
This was the first time
he'd 'spoken'. And it
wasn't a pleasant sort of
conversation either. Just
one, short "BAA!" An
abrupt warning. "Keep
away!"

"Arre baap re," Budh
Singh remarked good
humouredly. "Bahut gussa
hai tera, kyon bhai
bakre?!" He chucked the
ram under the chin and
went off into the garden to
tend to his plants.

Perhaps it had been the teasing tone of his voice, or perhaps it was the ignoble chucking of his chin. Or perhaps, again, it was the temptation of seeing Budh Singh's helpless, rotund posterior as he bent over his plants. Whatever it was, something incited Cleo. There was a ripping sound as he tore through the rickety old gate of the shelter and all of a sudden, he was

thudding down the garden, all head and horns. My mouth, full as it was with toast and jam, could only manage a garbled warning.

"Look out...!" But it was too late. Hard, curved horns had met with round, soft posterior and Budh Singh was lying amongst the calendula!

"Baa!" or rather "Bah!" was all Cleo had to say for himself as he haughtily made his way back to the shelter. Quite a change from my sweet, gentle, voiceless lamb. But there was worse to come!

I went across and stared at him with new eyes. Yes, he really had grown. He had powerful shoulders and wide, flaring nostrils. The bridge of his nose rose in a slight bump and gave him a queer, cross-eyed look. The wide-set, yellow eyes stared out suspiciously through slits of black pupils which betrayed no emotion. There was something about the eyes which made one uneasy because they gave away so little, indeed nothing of what was going on behind them in that head of his.

And atop that same head rose his horns. His horns, soon to become infamous, rippled down the sides of his massive head only to rise up majestically once more till they almost met above the proud crown of his head as if they could not bear to be parted. And they ended in the meanest, sharpest pin-points!

Cleo stood there, so cool, calm, collected, staring back so unmoved. as though nothing at all had happened! I tried upbraiding him. Really, a real scolding and ticking off. But I felt pretty foolish about it because it was plainly obvious that he wasn't listening, didn't care! In fact, in the middle of it all, he just burped into my face disdainfully and turned his back on me!

The very next morning, he did it again, only this time, it was much worse. A gentleman (and I really mean a gentle man) came to see my father. He was Sharmaji who took on typing jobs freelance. He was a thin, gaunt man who walked with a slightly mincing gait. Unfortunately, the pen door had yet to be restored. I suppose we'd assumed or hoped that yesterday's episode was an isolated one. In fact, Aftab had tied Dhania in with his pyjama tape. But I'd left Cleo loose in the shelter, since he was quite happy



I'm told that it took stout sticks and determined yells to drive Cleo back to the shelter. My furious father made attempts to tie the equally furious animal with Tipper's collar and leash, while my mother made attempts to soothe Sharmaji's shattered nerves with hot tea. The latter's job proved a little easier than the former's. For, determined as my father was to collar the ram, equally determined was Cleo never to submit to such humiliation. In fact, so determined was he (Cleo) that he actually took the liberty of butting my father right onto the ground!

Well, that was, of course, just too much. My bruised father called on all available resources and finally, the shattered shelter door was blocked with trunks containing quilts brought out from the lofts.

The rest of the morning, the inmates of the house were subjected to the rhythmic crashes of horns on steel trunks. I suppose that's what a 'battering ram' was inspired by. However, historical inspiration apart, when we got home from school, we were

greeted by a very pained and irritated household. The ominous mutterings of "Burra kabab (meat cutlets)..." made my blood run cold.

My love for Cleo had not in anyway diminished because of his misdemeanours. I could not help but recall the wistful look of the lovely lamb that he once was, as he stared admiringly at his playmates as they rough-housed each other. I knew that he had finally achieved what he had been so keen to, after a childhood of longing. His tail still whipped his bottom nervously as I approached and he reverted to his lamblike coyness so appealingly that I, for one, couldn't hold back my affections for this massive two-horned Cleopatra.

Dhania and Tipper were very impressed by Cleo's achievements. (I'm quite sure they perceived them as achievements.) It was their turn to secretly admire his enormous strength and wilful attitude. They had come to recognise that baleful, yellow, cross-eyed look when he was annoyed and huddled away from him. Other times, they were pleased and proud when he deigned to take notice

or, ecstasy of ecstasies, even play with them!!

٢

Cleo's temper would still occasionally (actually, not just occasionally) snap, and 'snap' with his temper went Tipper's leash. We replaced this with a leather one for Tipper and a chain for Cleo.

It was an awesome sight when once, some stray dogs picked up a fight with a newcomer right outside our gate. It displeased and irritated the ram no end. He ran to the end of his tether and was almost unaware when it pulled him up short. He dug his hind legs into the packed earth and threw all his weight into his mighty chest and muscled neck, straining against the restraining chain. SNAP!!

He'd broken through the metal and was off and away. His mighty horns splintered the old wooden green gate which had weathered so many storms. Cleo's forequarters went straight through the hole his horns had made, but the wooden shards were sharp as they sank through his belly. And he screamed. He screamed a scream that was so human that it froze the blood, and

brought prickly goosebumps on my arms as my legs turned to jelly. It took his second scream to galvanize me into action. The process of getting him off the splintered gate is too painful to describe. My memory still floods with Cleo's gushing blood that belched out from the severed artery.

Well, he didn't... He didn't die. He had within him greater strength than we had imagined. The vet didn't give him much of a chance. In fact, he suggested that we simply put him to sleep. I've never been so grateful to my parents as when they swore they would make every effort to save him, before allowing anyone to put him away.

Cleo was a funny sight really, lying there in the hospital ward, strung up with glucose drips and bottles of blood we'd got from a local abbatoir. It was also the first time that I hadn't thrown up at the sight of blood. That made me proud of myself and my Cleo for having shown me the way to be brave.

Before long, he was back. And how. He'd battered two people before his stitches had even been removed. And he'd gleefully announced his return to a wary Sharmaji with a fearful battle cry. Some may consider it cruel, but, for his safety as well as that of our visitors, we had to construct a pen of barbed wiring and metal in order to keep Cleo's horns to himself. After a few tentative attempts at this fencing, he learnt that even he could not tangle with barbed wire!

When we took our pets out for their evening walk, Cleo had to be restrained with a heavy metal chain the kind used on elephant's feet. Radha would run Tipper and Dhania, while Aftab and I grappled with aching muscles to manage both chain and its uncompromising ward. Cleo could actually hardly lift his head all the way

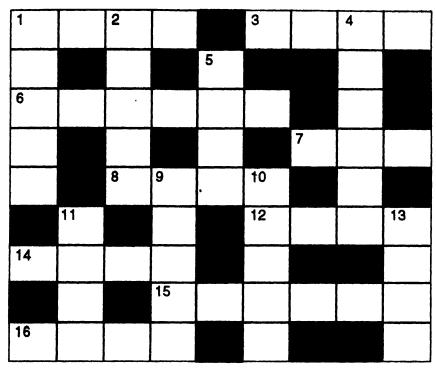
up with the weight of the chain, but it didn't stop him from walking with chest thrust out and his armoury flashing proudly above his head, ready to do full justice to his reputation.

But, back home, when I stood astride his massive shoulders and pulled his head up (it was the safest position, for it prevented him from lowering those horns) and stroked his chain and tickled his downy throat, he was at peace. His little tail would whisk like a happy eggbeater, and he'd be the beautiful, gentle lamb, Cleopatra, who had stood trembling in the shadows and wistfully admired the courage of those who dared to do what he would later come to master.



CROSSQUEZ

Kamala Rajan



CLUES

Across:	14. This skirt is short! (4)	5. Where you will find the plimsole line (4)
1. Baghdad is its capital		
(4)	15. Closed box with lens	9. She lives most of the
	for recording permanent pictures (6)	time in Wonderland (5)
2. Young one of a deer	pictures (0)	40 11 11
(4)	16. Occurring a single	10 collecting is philately (5)
0 0	time (4)	pimatery (5)
6 Christie; Queen of crime novels (6)		11. It moves in a
· ·	Down:	pride (4)
7. Employ; utilise (3)		
	1. Angry; agitated (5)	13. Enthusiasm;
8 one's energy;		flair (4)
drains, taxes (4)	2. Collect wealth (5)	
12. Out of,	4. Doctor colleague of	
discordant (4)	Sherlock Holmes (6)	
in the second second	DRENS WORLD JUNE 1998	27



"I am going to call him Cats," announced Jags.
Then he said more uncertainly, "Do you think it is a HE?" Without waiting for her reply, however, he pushed the box well under the bed to hide it from his mother's eyes.

It was an ongoing battle in their house. Jags picked up the little creatures from the garden tirelessly, and his mother emptied them out equally tirelessly. Jags set up a howling protest everyday he came back from school. Jaya sometimes hid the boxes from their mother to see him happy. The kid was really fond of every living thing and enjoyed watching them grow.

Jaya tried telling him that they were better off in the garden, their natural home.

"Jags, you can let them remain outside and still watch them," she told him many times. But Jagan would not listen.

"How can I know my Cats or Wormy from the others there?" he argued and continued bringing them in.

That evening there was a big commotion in the Rao household. Mrs. Rao was agitated and upset.

Look, I want the front yard dug up and camented immediately. I cannot keep this house clean otherwise. The quantity of mud that comes in! Not to speak of all the creepycrawlies that Jagan brings in!"

Mr. Rao, who liked to read his paper in peace, was forced to listen. "Okay, okay. I will do it this week," he said.

But Mrs. Rao was not to be put off so easily. "I have heard this answer for so long now that I don't believe you for a moment. I need a solid assurance," she demanded.

"But, Mummy, what about the lovely plants that we have?" asked Jaya, actually more concerned about Jagan's little friends than the plants themselves.

"We can grow any number of plants in pots. They will not only look neat, but also be easy to care for," replied Mrs. Rao. She was really determined.

"Mummy, suppose I talked to Jagan and told him not bring in any more insects and worms into the house? Then, then will you let the garden be as it is?" asked Jaya in desperation.

But Jagan came in then, dangling a red centipede from a stick.
The insect chose that very moment to wriggle free and drop on the living room floor, before scurrying under the sofa.

"Eee...!" shrieked his mother. "That's the last straw! I want the yard dug up tomorrow!" She went into her room and bolted the door while Jags searched for the precious pet.

So it was that that
Saturday, Mr. Rao
brought in two workmen
to dig up the yard, prior to
cementing it. It was late
afternoon by the time they
began digging. Jagan was
very upset at the turn of
events. He kept getting in
the way of the workmen,
trying to save his little
friends from the spade
and shovel.

"Jags, you are wasting your time," said Jaya, when she saw him frantically run to and fro.

"But look at them run! Poor things! I think Mother is being horrid. She is worse than Hitler!" Jagan had read about Hitler and the Jews recently and was quite angry. So angry, in fact, that tears welled up in his eyes.

"Come in, Jags," Jaya gently took him inside. "You cannot save all of

them, anyway," she explained to her ten-year-old brother.

"Where will they all go? What will they eat if there are no leaves or grass for them? Where will the relatives of Wormy go if there is no mud?" He was genuinely worried over the fate of all the little living things in their garden. Jagan opened the box containing his pet earthworm and put some more mud into it from his tightly clenched fist. He was openly weeping now. Jaya felt as sorry for him, as she felt for the creatures that were being driven homeless and suddenly was very angry with her mother.

In the middle of the night Jaya woke up. She heard someone speaking on the verandah of their house. Jagan's bed was empty.

"Poor little things! Are you hungry?" he was asking a green frog that was staring at him from the front step. Jaya gasped. The floor was crawling with earthworms, caterpillars and other smaller insects and Jagan was sitting surrounded by them. When he saw Jaya, he began sobbing all over agains

"Look, they have no-



where to go! And you say I can't keep them in boxes!
And now they are going to die! All because of Mother.
I hate her!" he began shouting.

"Shh...shh..." soothed Jaya, gingerly stepping over the insects and worms and holding him close. She could not believe that he was so attached to them. One could understand a love for bigger animals. But worms? Jagan went on crying noisily. Soon their parents came out of their room to find the cause of the commotion.

"Oh, no!" gasped Mrs. Rao. "Get them off my verandah!"

"You are a killer! Look! They have no home! I am going to bring them into the house, put them on my bed..." Jagan defiantly began picking them up.

Mrs. Rao began to protest, but her husband put a hand on her arm to stop her. She looked at Jagan helplessly. He was putting the insects into boxes, little matchboxes, bottles...anything that he could lay his hands on.

It was some time before he had taken care of all of them. Some of them had entered the house and got under the furniture and into various crevices and holes.

The next morning when Mrs. Rao began cleaning the rooms, she gave a shriek of horror. The entire living room and other rooms were covered with all kinds of worms and insects. "Get them off my floors!" she screamed.

The noise brought
Jagan and Jaya awake.
Instantly, he ran to his
'guests', kept in various
containers in the room.
Now it was his turn to
howl. Some of the worms
had died, others were
almost on the verge of
dving.

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" he screamed. "You have killed them! See!" He ran to his room and began sobbing his heart out. If one saw him, one would not have believed that he was crying over mere insects and worms...

His howling had brought both Mrs. and Mr. Rao to the room. Jaya watched her mother's face. There was a strange expression on it. It went from disgust at the creatures surrounding her son, to wonder at his compassion and then to acceptance...

"Jagan, I am sorry. Your friends will not lose their homes, I promise. Look, the men have only dug up a little portion around the front steps. We will make them stop tomorrow. We can cement just that portion. The rest of the garden can stay as it is. Okay?" she asked gently, stroking Jagan's hair.

"But look at all those that have died!"

"I am really sorry. I never thought that so many of the little things would die. Honest!"

Jaya watched her mother in wonder. She was kneeling beside Jagan, stroking his cheek, appearing truly sorry.

Jagan looked at her face. "You mean it? Really? Promise?" He still did not believe her.

"But, you have got to promise not to bring in any more of them into the house," said Mr. Rac, who had quietly been watching everything so far. "T! se worms and insects love living in their own homes among their friends."

"But I am their friend! I give them food and talk to them!"

"Would you like to live away from your home and people, even if someone gave you food and talked to you, Jagan?" asked Mr. Rao quietly.

Jagan seemed thoughtful. Finally he shook his



head. "Shall I return them all to their home, Papa?" he asked.

"Yes, and Jaya and I will help you to," replied Mr. Rao, picking up a piece of cardboard and allowing the worms and insects to climb on it before taking them out to the garden. Presently, Jagan brought his pets

from his room and gently released them in the garden, watching them fondly as they hurried into the undergrowth and burrowed into the mud.

"Goodbye, Wormy! 'Bye, Cats!" he called softly as they disappeared.

"Shall we bury the ones that have died, Papa?" he asked his father, his eyes becoming wet again.

"Sure, son! Let me gather them in a nice box and we will bury them in the garden!"

In a little while peace returned to the Rao home. Jaya heaved a big sigh of relief and smiled at her father. We have done our bit for conservation today, the smile seemed to say.

CHILDREN'S WORLD JUNE 1995

OUR LAIRD'S A LASSIE - PART 2

OUR LAIRD'S
A LASSIE! WE'LL
BE THE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF THE
HIGHLANDS!

WHAT

THAT'S ME!
ELIZABETH MACWILIAM
MACGURLIE, CHIEFTAIN
OF THE CLAN!

(L.)







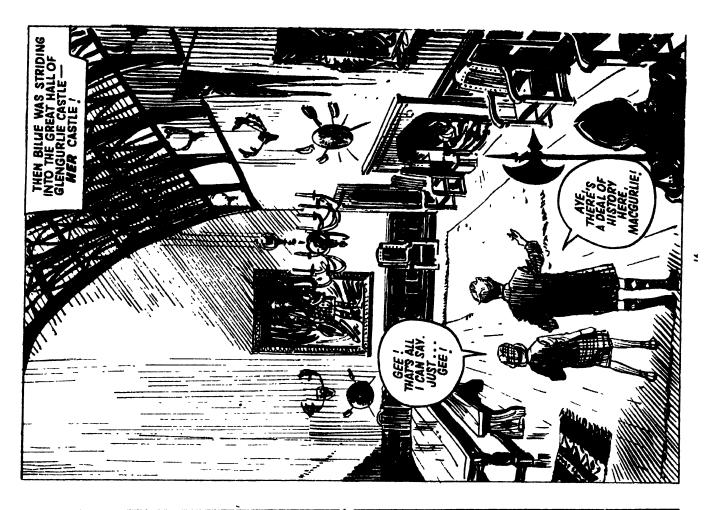
WITH AN ANGRY GESTURE, BILLIE HALTED THE PIPERS. THEN ...

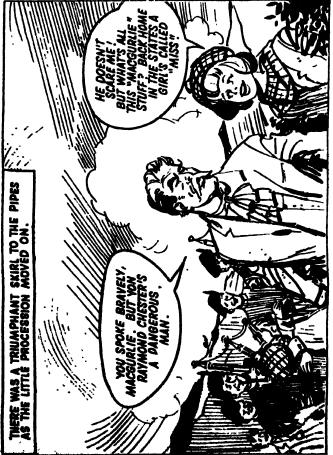




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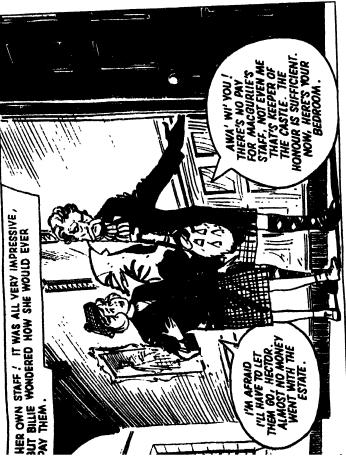












ADTTA'S



OFFICE



And the early lessons tearned in this "school" were happy ones...lessons that they will fondly remember, always.

Aditya started going to office when he was only four months old.

He went with his mother who worked on a hill Many, many green trees covered it still.

Green, green grass covered the slopes
Flowers of many colours blossomed in droves.

On Aditya's first day at office, the hill said,

"Welcome, welcome to you, I am so glad
So many friends await you, my little one
We will all together have so much fun."

And Aditya, bright-eyed and happy, smiled a
dimpled, toothless grin.

Hazel was the first friend he met on the hill.

Just like him, she was a tiny baby still.

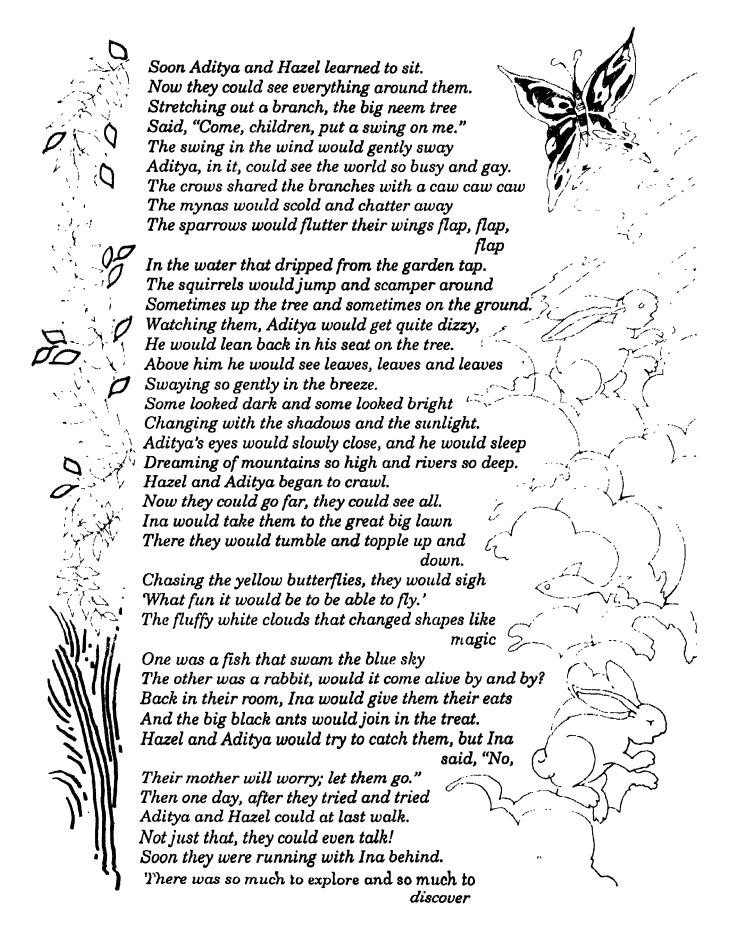
Waiting for them was the smiling Ina
In the little room that would be their arena.
Ina said, "Welcome, little ones.
I will look after you while your mothers are busy at work.

The three of us will sing and dance and play

Together we will explore this wonderful hill, day

after day."





Every new step was a brand new adventure.
Their frisky friends, the squirrels, would gather,
The babblers would scold and patter and chatter.
The children would give them grain or seed at least
Scatter it under the neem tree as a feast.
Soon they made friends with the peacocks too
The peahens were grey but the peacocks were
blue.

With a shining neck and trailing tail
The peacocks would make all the other birds look pale.
When they danced for the peahen, the children would
say

"Let us dance like the peacock today."

And they would spread out their arms and sway to
and fro,

The peahen would wonder, Why! These peacocks still have feathers to grow!'

Then the clouds would gather and begin to grow dark, They would rumble and thunder, and lightning would spark.

The peacocks would call, shrieking and loud
The koels would coo-coo at every new cloud.
The children would jump and skip and hop
Waiting and waiting for the first drop.
One day the rain began with a plop plop plop
Then fell like a shower that just would not stop.
They ran right out to dance in the rain
Calling to their friends again and again.
From puddles everywhere frogs began to call
Plants and insects, animals, big and small.
The rain washed them all fresh, bright and green
Giving them the water they needed to grow and be
clean.

When the rains were over, it grew a bit colder
Aditya and Hazel had grown a bit older.
They still found new friends each day
When they were indoors or went out to play.
Mamma mongoose with the babies in tow
Would sniff the air, always alert to go.
When Aditya and his mother ate lunch on the lawn
Sometimes a jackal would run across and be gone.
In the tall grass lived the big, black snake
But Ina had told them, "Don't be afraid.

It will eat small creatures and many rats too. But if you don't bother it, it will not bite you." Then came the friends the children liked best A great gang of black-faced, long-tailed guests. Whooping and hooping, leaping from tree to tree Thumping over the roof, so very bold and free. They would sit on the high branches of neem. our old friend in green Eating all the leaves, fruits and flowers to be seen. The children inside, would whoop and call "Hey, monkeys, let us see who can make the funniest faces of all!" The children would wait for the ripe badams to fall, But when they did, they would find the squirrels had gnawed almost all. In the winter they would play outside all day Digging the earth and shaping the clay. Now Aditya and Hazel had found a favourite champa On it, they would climb like squirrels and swing like monkeys. It would be their rickshaw, train, bus or an aeroplane tree, When they pretended to go on a trip just for free. Aditya's baby sister has just joined the fun, She is tiny like they were at one. Hazel and Aditya just wait for the day When she will talk and run and join in their play. Soon Aditya and Hazel will go to school, Make many new friends and learn some new rules. Learn many new things, reading, writing A-B-C Study books about animals and birds, the clouds and the trees. They will tell their new friends about birds and trees on the hill, About squirrels and peacocks that wait for them About the favourite branch on the champa tree And the many many friends so happy and free.

ANSWERS TO CROSSQUIZ

(See page 27)

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NEW SECRETARIAT BUILDINGS, 'B' BLOCK 6TH & 7TH FLOOR 1, KIRAN SHANKAR ROY ROAD, CALCUTTA - 700 001





Recipes: Jaya Parmasiyan

Illustrations: Subir Roy

Requirements:

- 1. 3 cups of maida (fine flour)
- 2. 1-1/3 cup of finely powdered sugar
- 3. 2 cups of crushed cornflakes (spread in a plate)
- 4. Ghee (clarified butter) 3/4 cup to 1 cup
- 5. 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 6. ½ teaspoon vanilla essence
- 7. Water in a shallow pan

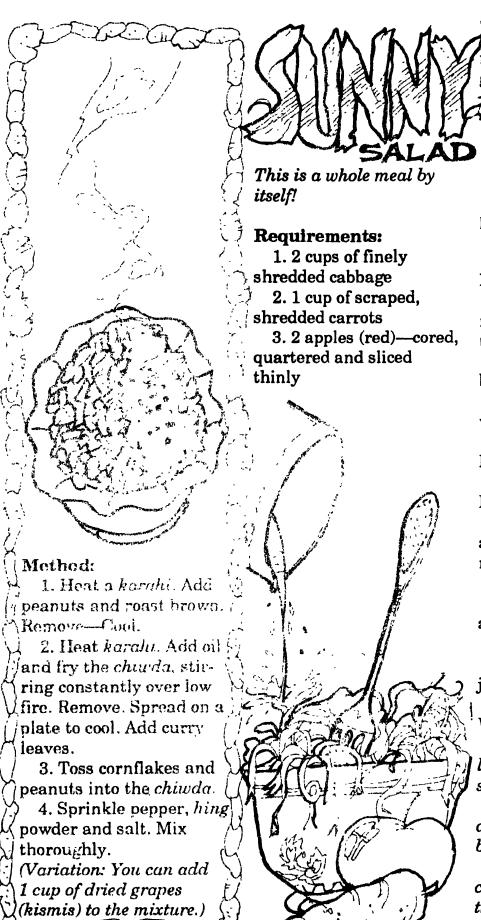
Method:

- 1. Mix *maida*, sugar and baking powder well.
- 2. Add ghee little by little and mix thoroughly with fingertips.
 - 3. Form into small balls
- 4. Drop it in water, quickly lift it and roll it over the crushed corn flakes
- 5. Arrange the balls in a baking tray and bake them in a moderately hot oven for 20 minutes
- 6. Remove. Cool and serve.

Requirements:

- 1. 4 cups of cornflakes
- % 2.4 eups of *chiwda* (parched rice)
 - 3. 2 cups of peanuts
 - 4. 1 teaspoon salt
- 5. 1 teaspoon pepper powder
- 6. ¼ teaspoon hing (asafoetida) powder
- 7. 2 tablespoons refined oil
- 8. *Kadi patta* curry leaves (crushed)

CHILDREN'S WORLD JUNE 19



4. ½ cup peanuts roasted and coarsely ground

5. Juice of 2 lemons

6. 1 grated onion

7. 1 cup thick milk

8. 2 tablespoons sugar

9. 1½ teaspoon salt

10. 1 teaspoon pepper powder

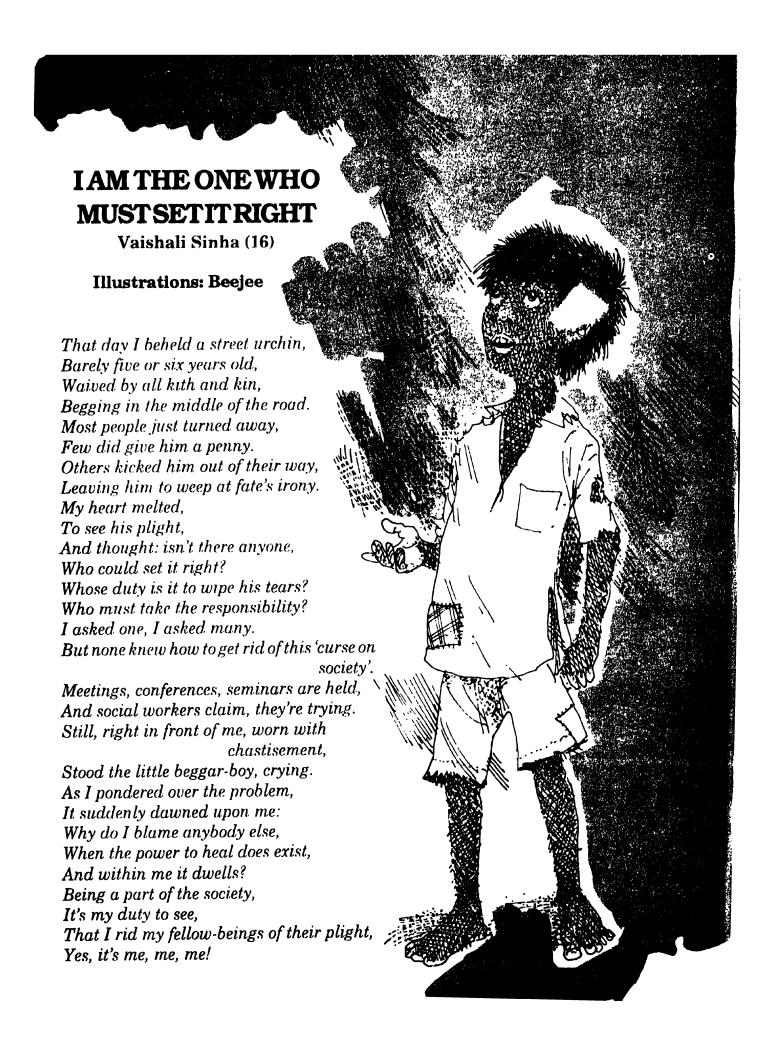
11. 2 pods of garlic

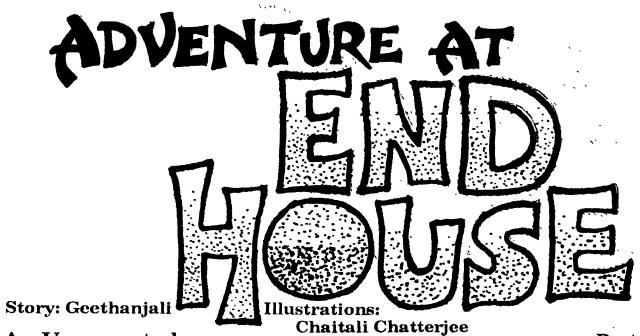
Method:

- 1. Crush garlic pods, rub it well and all around the salad bowl.
- 2. Add shredded cabbage, carrot. Mix.
- 3. Add apple slices. Mix well.
- 4. Add grated onions. Mix well.
- 5. Add ground peanuts. Mix well.
- 6. Sprinkle salt, sugar and pepper to the mixture.
 - 7. Mix thoroughly.
- 8. Sprinkle lemon juice and mix well.
 - 9. Chill in the fridge.
- 10. Add thickened milk just before serving.

Variation

- 1. Sprouted beans, lentils can be added to the salad.
- 2. Shredded beetroots and thinly sliced cucumber can also be added.
- 3. Grated (fresh) coconut can be substituted for the thick milk.





An Unexpected Phone Call Part VI

Sheetal, Vivek, Manisha and Sidharth enjoy Miss Daisy's company at End House. Snapper, Miss Daisy's dog, attacks her neighbours yet again. Anita, Miss Daisy's cousin, who has come to meet her sister Marie, takes snapper to a friends' house far away. The children are unable to trace Shiela, Anita's twin, who is suspected of attempting to steal Marie's jewellery from End House.

ARIE arrived the next day. Miss Daisy and Anita went to the airport to receive her. The children did not run over to End House as usual, as they guessed that Miss Daisy would like to spend time alone with her cousin. In the evening, Miss Daisy herself called them over to meet Marie.

"Marie," she said, "I would like you to meet my four friends-Vivek, Manisha, Siddharth and Sheetal."

Marie nodded at them affably. She was short and plump with a happy smiling face which turned

red whenever she laughed which was quite often. The children could not help thinking how different she looked from the twins.

Anita rose to her feet.
"We had better be going to
the bank now to get the
jewels."

"Marie is leaving the day after tomorrow for Delhi. I think it will be risky to keep the jewels in the house all of tomorrow. I think it will be better to get them tomorrow. You never know, Sheila may be hanging around waiting for an opportunity to get her hands on the jewels," Miss Daisy said

thoughtfully.

"Oh," Anita said looking disappointed, "I did want to have a look at the jewels. I won't be able to come with you tomorrow as I am going over to my friend's house to have a look at Snapper. Oh, never mind! I suppose I can have a look at them after I come back."

"Where is Sheila?"
Marie wanted to know, "I would like to see her before I go back to Australia. Is she still in Trivandrum with her husband?"

The children looked at one another. Anita gave an odd laugh "We have

reason to think that she is in Madras and that she is after your jewels." She then proceeded to tell her astonished sister all about the attempted burglary.

Marie heard her out in silence. Then she said, "I don't believe it! How did Shiela turn out this way? I always thought that she had a kind heart inspite of her rough ways. It seems that I was wrong."

Sheetal had been listening to this exchange with interest. Now she said, "If you and Shiela are so alike, how did your mother tell you apart?"

Anita laughed. We used to have a whale of a time fooling every one. Then one day I cut myself rather badly on my wrist and that left an awful scar. The others used my scar to tell me apart from Shiela.

"I do wish I had a twin," Sheetal said wistfully. "It's so boring to be an only child. It must have been fun tricking everyone."

"I hardly think that a nasty, scheming twin like Sheila is much fun. Anyway managing one Sheetal is more than enough. I don't much fancy having to put up with another little girl like you," Siddharth laughed.

Sheetal lunged out at

him and laughed. Then she said soberly, "I sure am glad that Aunt Daisy did not bring the jewels back today. I bet that the awful Sheila must be making her plans now."

"I have got an idea," Vivek exclaimed. "Sheila cannot possibly know that Aunt Daisy hasn't brought the jewels from the bank. She may make an attempt to steal the jewels tonight itself. She might assume that since Marie has arrived, Aunt Daisy must have handed over the jewels to her. Let us keep watch tonight. If we see anything suspicious, we can rouse Aunt Daisy and her cousins."

Sheetal stifled a yawn "Count me out," she said "I don't think I can come. You see Dad stays awake half the night, reading."

"Oh sure," Siddharth scoffed. "Why don't you admit that you don't want to lose your beauty sleep?"

Manisha said,"Let us meet at ten o'clock then. We will go over to End House and keep watch in the garden, we will sit up the whole night if necessary."

"Right," Vivek said. "Do you sleep by the window, Manisha? If so, keep your window open. Siddharth and I usually go to bed at nine-thirty. I shall set

the alarm for ten o'clock and then we shall come and call you, okay?"

"Fine," Manisha agreed, "now let us get going. It is six already and I can see my grandmother at the door, waiting for me."

That night at ten o'clock, the alarm went off in Vivek's room. Vivek leapt up at once but Siddharth slept soundly. Vivek shook his brother but he only turned the other side and slept. With a disgusted look, Vivek let him sleep. He ran over to Manisha's house hoping that she atleast would wake up. He looked around. The were lights still burning in Mr. Mahadev's house and he could hear the television blaring in Aunt Maya's house. End House was in darkness as Miss Daisy and her cousins had retired to bed early.

Vivek went stealthily to Manisha's window "Hey, Manisha, wake up," he said.

A tousled head appeared at the window. "I am coming," Manisha said in a sleepy voice.

Five minutes later she joined Vivek outside, "Where is Siddharth?" Manisha asked in a whisper.

Vivek grinned, "Sleeping Beauty is snoring away in

his room. Wait till Sheetal hears about it. She will tease him for it."

The two children jumped over the low wall which separated End House from Manisha's house. "What do we do now?" Manisha asked, following Vivek.

"Let us sit down under that tree," Vivek suggested.

Manisha followed Vivek to the tree. She jumped out of her skin as she trod on something soft. For one awful moment she thought that it was a snake. An agonised miaow told her it was a kitten. Sure enough the ginger kitten who had been hurt by Snapper looked indignantly at her, tail wagging furiously.

"Sorry Ginger,"
Manisha apologised. "But what are you doing here?
I suppose you are taking advantage of the fact that Snapper is not here, to take a stroll around End House."

Ginger purred and settled himself on her lap as she sat down. The two children waited but there was no sign of Shiela.

Manisha heard the clock strike eleven before she dozed off.

She woke up with a start when Vivek shook her awake, "Hey, wake up sleepy head! It is nearly two o'clock. Let us go back home."

"Do you mean to say that we have been sitting here all this while?" Manisha demanded.

Vivek yawned, "Yes. I can hardly keep my eyes open!"

The next morning Vivek overslept. Siddharth waited impatiently for him to wake up. Finally at eight o'clock he shook his brother awake. "Why didn't you wake me up last night?" he demanded indignantly. "Did Shiela come?"

"Yes," Vivek said sarcastically, "we have got her all tied up."

"Really?" Siddharth asked in surprise and then flushed on seeing his brother's sardonic expression, "you are joking of course. What happened?"

"Nothing much. We waited till two o'clock. Shiela did not put in an appearance."

"Just as well I did not come. Are you going today also?"

Vivek sneezed, "Yes of course, Marie is leaving tomorrow with the jewels. Sheila will have to act tonight itself."

When the boys went to Manisha's house after a late breakfast, they found her being subjected to a lecture by her grandmother as she had just got up from bed. "Wait for me, I shall join you in a moment"—Much to her grandmother's disgust she gobbled her breakfast and went to join the boys. "Let us go to End House. If I hang around here I shall get on Grandmother's nerves. She is furious as I overslept this morning. We will stop by Sheetal's house and call her."

When the four children ran into End House, they saw Miss Daisy and Marie getting ready to go out. "No, no don't go, children. We are just going to the locker. Why don't you wait here till we get back? You can see the jewels also then," Marie smiled.

"The house does seem empty without Snapper. I wonder where he is." Sheetal said, once the two women had left.

Vivek sneezed loudly, "Anita has gone to see him. We must ask her how he is as soon as she comes back. Oh, dear! Last night's escapade has given me a nasty cold!"

"I have a sore throat,"
Manisha declared walking
over to her favourite
piano.

The phone trilled. The children looked at one another. "Do you think we ought to answer it?" Vivek

asked doubtfully.

"Why not?" Siddharth asked, "maybe we can take an important message for Aunt Daisy. Go on and answer the phone Vivek."

Vivek ran to the telephone and picked up the receiver. "Hullo, is it 444666?" an operator asked. When Vivek answered that it was, the operator said, "Trunk call for Daisy from Trivandrum." This was followed by a lady's voice. "Hallo Daisy, is that you?"

"No, Miss Daisy has gone out. This is her

There was a faint pause. Then the lady said, "Well, tell Daisy that Shiela called. By the way, has my sister Marie arrived from Australia?"

Vivek was so surprised to hear the name of the caller that he remained silent. "Hullo, hullo, are you still there?" the caller asked urgently.

Vivek gathered his wits and answered, "Yes, your sister has arrived here. She has gone out with Aunt Daisy. I shall tell them that you called."

"Thank you and tell

replaced the receiver.

There was a strange gleam in his eyes as he turned towards the other there. "Care to guess as to who called now?" he queried.

"Who was it?" the other three asked in one voice.

Vivek looked mystified as he said, "You will never believe this but the caller was Shiela. She was ringing up from Trivandrum. So what on earth does all this mean?" Continued



PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit vour hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

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Mithu (16)
Block No. 19 F
Avenue A, Sector 7
Bhilai-1, Durg Dist.
Madhya Pradesh 490006
India
Playing
Any country

7400
Jigme Wangmo (15)
c/o Santen Gyeltshan
General Store
Khothakpa Gypsum P.O.
Pema Gatshel
Bhutan
Pen-friends, table tennis
Any country

7401
Sonam Chhoden (14)
c/o Ki Wangmo
Deleg Tshonkheng
Diafam, S. Jongkhar
Bhutan
Stamps & coins, reading
Any country

7402 Sakshi Joshi (10) 76 Vidhya Vihar P.O. Banjarawala Dehradun, U.P., India Reading, dancing Any country

7403 Sarika Aneja (13) 173-R Model Town

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Member No (To be filled by office) Issue dated							
Name: Mister / Miss							
(IN BLOCK - G(IFRS)							
Address:							
Hobbies:							
Pen-friends wanted in (Country)							
*Age limit: 16 years Signature							

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Sonepat 131001 Haryana, India Drawing, collecting stickers U.S.A., Switzerland

7404
Mukta Jain (14)
c/o Mr. V.K. Jain
D-2, Donimalai Township
Dist. Bellary
Karnataka, India
Reading, collecting posters
Japan, Philippines

7405
Ekta Kapoor (10)
B-A 323/2, Tagore Garden
New Delhi 110027, India
Painting, reading
Any country

7406
Minu Sreedhar (14)
Qr. 6/B, Street 17, Sector 7
Durg Dist., Bhilai 490006
Madhya Pradesh, India
Reading, music
Any country

7407
Usha Rajan (8)
d/o Mr. R. Naga Rajan
367/E Railway Quarters
M.G. Colony
Bangalore 560023
Karnataka, India
Reading, gardening
China, U.S.A.

7408
S. Preethi (14)
398, 5th Cross
Gokul II Phase
Yeswanthpur
Bangalore 560055
Karnataka: India

Reading, letter writing Other than India

7409
M. Lakshmi (14)
1347, 10th Main
4th Cross, R.P.C. Layout
Vijaynagar, II Stage
Bangalore 560040
Karnataka, India
Letter writing, reading
Japan, Switzerland

7410
Asha Rajan (14)
d/o Mr. R. Naga Rajan
367/E Railway Quarters
M.G. Colony
Bangalore 560023
Karnataka, India
Gardening, reading
Other than India

7411
Santhoshi DCNS (14)
17 Amarjyothi Layout
RMV Extension
II Stage P.O.
Bangalore 560094
Karnataka, India
Stamps, reading
U.S.A., U.K.

7412
Tshering Lhamo Pinky (15)
Samtse R.I.C.B.
Second Floor
Flat No. 2, Samtse
Southern Bhutan, Bhutan
Music, reading
Any country

7413 Hemali Pandya (14) E-122 IFFCO, Udaynagar Gandhidham Kutch 370203 Gujarat, India Reading, badminton Any country

7414
Dipti Gangawat (15)
37 Mandi Ki Nal
Udaipur 313001
Rajasthan, India
Painting, making friends
India, Japan

7415
Sonali Golatkar (13)
c/o Mr. Sadanand T.
Golatkar'
M.H.B., Bld. 49/2112
Vartak Nagar
Thane 400606
Maharashtra, India
Reading, sports
Japan, Germany

7416
Deepa Sarwan (15)
D-625 Chittaranjan Park
New Delhi 110019, India
Acting, playing
Switzerland, Japan

7417
Sunny Hangsik (15)
Roll No. 3 (Class VII)
V.K.V. Niausa
Dist. Tirap 786631
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Football, movies
India, Japan

7418
Doll Bharadwaj (10)
H-115, DDA Flats
Naraina, New Delhi 110028
India
Stamps, swimming
Any country

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GIRLS

7419
Manju Varghese (13)
Vayalil House
Uppukulam P.O., Alavallur
Via. Palakkad
Kerala, India
Painting, pen-friends
Any country

7420
Chemandi Hebrom (13)
Q.No. B 28/222
Residential Colony
UCIZ Jadugoda
P.O. Jadugoda Minas
Dist. East Singbhum
Bihar 832102, India
Reading, music
Any country

7421
Vanika Bhanot (13)
A-1 Mandakini Enclave
Greater Kailash II
Near Kalka Public School
New Delhi 110019, India
Singing, reading
U.S.A., Switzerland

7422
Nikhita S. Chandran (10)
c/o Sathi Chandran
Kooluputtukonam
Kudappanakunnu
Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala, India
Reading, drawing
Any country

7423
Shalini B. (11)
515 Asia House
Kasturba Gandhi Marg
New Delhi 110001, India
Reading, singing
Japan, U.S.A.

7424
Paromita Roy (10)
59 L Road, Bistupur
Jamshedpur-1
Bihar, India
Dancing, drawing
Any country

7425
Jalpa P. Dave (12)
C-20 Uday Nagar
Gandhidham
Dist. Kachchh
Gujarat, India
Playing, dancing
India

7426

Thenzin Cham (15)
Yangehen Phug High
School
Class VIII-B
Thimphu, Bhutan
Collecting cards & pictures
U.S.A.

7427 Shilpa Sharma (14) c/o Mr. D.D. Sharma A-53 N.D.S.E. Part II New Delhi 110049, India Music, writing letters U.S.A., Australia

7428
Vidya Thyagarajan (16)
No. 11/H 'Yamuna' Flats
IInd Floor
Maharaja Surya Road
Alwarpet, Madras 600018
Tamil Nadu, India
Writing letters, pen-friends
Any country

Any country
7429
Leena Chowdhury (12)
c/o Basu Dev Chowdhury
NTE 172 Gole Bazaar

West Bengal, India
Reading, making friends
Germany, U.K.
7430
Avina Mohta (14)
St. Joseph's Convent

Kharagpur

Panchgani, Dist. Satara Maharashtra 4 12805, India Dancing, music Any country

7431 Kalvy Mary K. (15) Suryakanthi Apartments Flat No. 6 C Ivvattil Junction

Chittoor Road, Cochin-11

Kerala, India Reading, cycling Any country

7432
Karthiyayani R. (9)
34-G, 11 Main Road
R.A. Puram
Madras 600028
'Tamil Nadu, India

'Tamil Nadu, India Stamps & coins Any country

7433
Harsha Jain (13)
DG III 218 Vikas Puri
New Delhi 110018, India
Collecting stickers,
dancing

U.S.A., Japan

Sheeja (15)
c/o Sheeja Beauty Parlour
H.No. 11-9-82, Besthwarpet
Raichur 584101
Karnataka, India
Writing poems, drawing
Any country

7435
Desmond Tamba (10)
Mountain View English
School
Chalsa, Dist Jalpaiguri
West Bengal 735206, India
Drawing, reading
Denmark, Israel

7436 Sreehari R. (8) Jyothirmaya Nechipuzhoor P.O. Pala 686574 Kerala, India Music Australia, U.S.A.

7437
Abhishek Kumar (13)
G-45 1st Floor
Green Park
New Delhi 110016, India
Stamps, making scientific
models
U.K., Japan

7438
Shiva Kumar B.M. (14)
10th Std.
Jawahar Navodaya
Vidyalaya
Balehonnur CRS (Post)
Seegod
Chickmagalur Dist
Karnataka, India
Football, painting
Any country

7439 K. Anish (10) D-No. 956, Behind Post Office Krishnaraja Sagara Mandya Dist. Karnataka 571607, India Cricket, drawing Any country

7440
Kashish Kohli (13)
s/o R.K. Kohli
48 H.B. Colony
Katni (M.P.), India
Coins, electronic games
Japan, U.S.A.

7441
Renish V.J. (14)
Shivaji House
Sainik School (P.O.)
Kazhakootam
Trivandrum 695585
Kerala, India
Reading, stamps
Any country

7442
Gaurav Agarwal (16)
C-31 Staff Colony
M.L.N.R. Engg. College
Allahabad 211004
U.P., India
Stamps & coins,
cartooning
Switzerland, U.S.A.

7443
Vishnu V. (10)
Geetha Bhavan
Karuvatta South, Alapuzha
Kerala, India
Stamps, reading
Australia, France

7444 Akhil Kumar (15) %X-289-D, Near I.T. Colony Pitampura New Delhi 110034, India Reading, stickers U.S.A., U.K.

7445
Kumud Pegu (14)
c/o Mr. M.C. Pegu
R.M.S. Office
Jorhat 785001
Assam, India
Quizzing, solving puzzles
Ukraine, China

7446
Sanjoy Deb (14)
Class VIII
Govt. H.S. School
Kalaktang, P.O.
Kalaktang 790002
Via Bomdila
Dist. W. Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Stamps, writing

7447
Viral Jain (13)
Sanjeevan Vidyalaya
Aruni House
Panchgani 412805
Maharashtra, India
Music, stamps
U.S.A., Japan

7448
Sujan Kumar (16)
c/o Mr. Samar Biswas
Luma Studio
P.O. Matelli
Dist. Jalpaiguri
West Bengal, India
Reading, music
U.K., Nepal

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7449
M.R. Nagral (15)
C-1 Najma Cottage
Natwar Nagar
Road No. 5
Jogeshwari (East)
Bombay 400060, India
Cycling, reading
Any country

7450
K. Mahesh (10)
D.No. 956
Behind Post Office
K.R.S. Mandya Dist.
Karnataka 571607, India
Cricket, drawing
Other than India

7451
K.P. Rao (15)
V.K.V. Roing
Dibang Valley Dist.
Arunachal Pradesh 792110
India
Cycling, jogging
Kuwait

7452
Rahul Gupta (14)
2652, IX C, Sanga House
Sainik School
Chittorgarh
Rajasthan 312001, India
Pen-friends, stamps
India, U.S.A.

7453 Kunal (12) B-4, New Professional Flat Kadma Sonari, Link Road Kadma, Jamshedpur Bihar, India Reading, stamps U.S.A., U.K.

7454
Sushant (12)
B-4, New Professional Flat
Kadma Sonari, Link Road
Kadma, Jamshedpur
Bihar, India
Reading, stamps
U.S.A., U.K.

7455
Nitin Bhushan (16)
Kirori Malveo Prakash
Shiv Ganj Mandi
Shamli 247776
Dist. Muzaffarnagar
U.P., India
Pen-friends, modelling
Any country

7456
Subir S. (13)
Roll No. 3044
Tagore House
Sainik School,
Kazhakootam
Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala, India
Stamps, reading
Any country

7457
Sayuj M. (13)
s/o Sub. Maj. K.K.
Mohanan
HQ TM & K, Sub Area
Madras 600009
Tamil Nadu, India
Stamps & stickers
Italy, Bhutan

7458 Samir S. Potdar (14) Qr. No. 67/D
Type III, Sector III
O.F. Chanda
Chandrapur 442501
Maharashtra, India
Stamps & coins
Kenya, Canada

Vinay S. Parashar (13) c/o Dr. Ranjan Parashar Ranjan Maternity Home Yogi Complex Opp. Old ST Nadiad, Gujarat, India Collecting books Any country

7460
Wangam Panka (15)
V.K.V. Niausa
Post Longding
Dist. Tirap 786631
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Football, martial arts
Any country

7461 Anuj Jain (16) A/C-1-138 C Shalimar Bagh Delhi 110052, India Travelling, pen-friends India, U.S.A.

7462
Jim Panka (14)
c/o T. Panka
Kaimai Village
Post Khonsa
Dist. Tirap 786630
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Football, making friends
Any country

7463
Arindam Patra (15)
15/F Lenin Sarani
P.O. Shrirampur 712203
Dist. Hooghly
West Bengal, India
Watching TV, reading
U.S.A., U.K.

7464
Tarun Upadhyay (16)
A-1 Jwalamukhi Hostel
IIT Hauz Khas
New Delhi 110016
Making friends, music
India

7465
Jean J. Philip (9)
Nedumchirayil
Sacred Heart
Mount P.O., Kottayam
Kerala, India
Stamps, cricket
Any country

7466
Rohan Sharma (10)
4577 Kucha Bibi Gohar
Charkhe Walan
Delhi 110006, India
Reading, playing
Japan

7467
Karan Sharma (11)
4577 Kucha Bibi Gohar
Charkhe Walan
Delhi 110006
Cricket, reading
India

7468 Anand Sharma B-150 New Colony Kondli, Delhi 110096 Making friends, swimming India

7469
Raju Dutta (11)
28/A Sarat Ghosh Street
Calcutta 700014
West Bengal, India
Reading, making friends
U.S.A., U.K.

7470
Pradeep Jain (13)
'309 SFS Flats
Ashok Vihar, Phase 4
Delhi 110052
Cricket, make-and-do
activities
India

7471
Alphonso Smith (14)
Kendriya Vidyalaya Staff
Quarters II/B/4
Pune 411031
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, basketball
U.S.A., France

7472
Dhaval Shah (11)
c/o Bharat S. Shah
66-J-3 Qrts.
Mithapur 361345
Gujarat, India
Drawing, music
U.S.A., India

7473 Jasbir Chaudhury (13) s/o Lt. Col. B.S. Chaudhury
C.O.D. Dehu Road
Pune 412101
Maharashtra, India
Stamps & coins
Russian Federation,
Japan

7474
G. Sudhir (9)
48-9-8 'Bhasha'
Vishnu Nagar
Gunadala 520005
Vijayawada
Andhra Pradesh, India
Electronics, music
Any country

7475
Dipu Borah (14)
Govt. Hr. Sec. School
Kalaktang 790002
P.O. Kalaktang
Dist. West Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Reading, judo
Japan, U.S.A.

7476
Biswajit Acharjee (14)
Class VIII
P.O. Kalaktang
Govt. Hr. Sec. School
Kalaktang
Dist. West Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh 790002
India
Reading, letter writing
Australia, U.S.A.

7477 -Zaheer Ahmed (15) Jamia Sr. Sec. School J.M.I. Jamia Nagar

New Delhi 110025, India Cricket, swimming U.K., U.S.A. Any country

7478
Tushar Jain (16)
Katyayan House
Birla Public School
Pilani 333031
Rajasthan, India
Music, writing letters
Any country

7479
Madhu Muchrikar (12)
Principal's Quarters
KV No. 1, Dehu Road
Pune 412113
Maharashtra, India
Photography, stamps
U.S.A., Japan

7480
B. Somnatha (15)
s/o Mr. B.R.
Marulasidappa
Banur 577135
Chikmagalur Dist.
Karnataka, India
Reading, making friends
Any country

7481
V. Vishal Jain (14)
Vijay Textiles
7 Kurumbar Street
Salem 636001
Tamil Nadu, India
Music, dancing
U.S.A., U.K.

7482 Pratap Kumar Mallick (16) s/o Mr. Narsingh Mallick OCC J 20 Devapur P.O. Devapur, Via Manchirial Dist. Adilabad 504218 Andhra Pradesh, India Sports, reading Any country

7483
Kunal Advani (13)
1, 'Kismat'
G/F Opp. Sassoon Docks
Colaba, Bombay 400005
Maharashtra, India
Table tennis, computers
Any country

7484
Ketan B. Ghorpade (15)
LIG A 5/10 Sindhu Nagar
Nagadi, Pune 411044
Maharashtra, India
Skating, painting
Japan, U.S.A.

7485
P.K. Shivakumar (12)
B-93 H.A. Colony, Pimpri
Pune 411018
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, reading
Japan, Thailand

7486
Prashanth R. (15)
Sri Ramakrishna
Vidyashala
Yadavgiri, Mysore
Karnataka, India
Making friends, karate
Kuwait, Japan

7487 Sam Mathew (14) c/o Mr. P.S. Mathew G.P. Agarwal's Building Block No. II Subhash Ward Padav Mandla Madhya Pradesh 481661 Coins, reading India

7488
Ajneesh Kumar (13)
Class VIII
House No. A-229
J.J. Colony, Budhnagar
Inderpuri
New Delhi 110012
India
Coins, lawn tennis
U.S.A., India

7489
Sourabh Sehgal (13)
27 Model Town
Pathankot, Punjab, India
Shooting, basketball
U.S.A., India

7490
Kiran (10)
c/o A.S. Managolikar
K.C. Rani Road
Gadag 582101
Karnataka
India
Reading, painting
Any country

7491
Ensengingka (13)
c/o Jeki Phuntso (DDI)
Craft Centre of Tawang
P.O. & Dist. Tawang
Arunachal Pradesh 790104
India
Photography, stamps
Any country

7492
Arung Tingkatara (13)
Vivekananda Kendra
Vidyalaya
Niausa, Post Niausa
Dist. Tirap 786631
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Gardening, reading
Any country

7493 Shishir Mishra (13) c/o Lt. Col. S.K. Mishra P 311/1 Alkapuri Dehu Road Pune, Maharashtra, India' Photography, reading U.S.A., U.K.

7494
Rayudu Ravi Khan (15)
c/o Rayudu Prabhakar
Rao
H.No. G-53-10, Ithanagar
Tenali 522201, Guntur
Andhra Pradesh, India
Cricket, drawing
U.S.A.

7495
J. Vijay Kumar (12)
B 23/3 HDFC Colony
Chinchwad, Pune 411019
Maharashtra, India
Stamps & coins, painting
Australia, Hongkong

7496
Karun Bir Singh (13)
646/1, Garden City
Dehu Road, Pune 412101
Maharashtra, India
Stamps & coins
Hong Kong, Malaysia

7497
Padi Khorey Obing (13)
V.K.V. Sher
c/o Principal
Dist. Papum Pare 791121
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Cricket, swimming
Brazil, Japan

7498
Suresh Hun Kamude (14)
114/9, Ashok Nagar
Dehu Road, Pune 412101
Maharashtra, India
Reading, stamps
New Zealand, Argentina

7499
Arindam Konwar (13)
Sainik School Goalpara
P.O. Rajpara
Dist. Goalpara 783133
Assam, India
Table tennis, coins
Any country

7500
Ajay Y. Balappanavar (14)
c/o Dr. Y.H. Balappanavar
Cottage Hospital Quarters
Gadag 582101
Dist. Dharwar
Karnataka, India
Stamps, reading
Other than India

7501 Sanjeev (14) Bhavan's Vidya Mandir Girinagar, Kochi 20 Kerala, India Painting, football U.S.A., Australia 7502
Mukul Sharma (16)
s/o Shri V.K. Sharma
Kasimpur Sainik Nagar
Gali No. 16
Meerut Cantt. 250001
U.P., India
Martial arts, reading
Any country

7503
Saumik Basak (12)
598, Type IV
Laxmi Bai Nagar
New Delhi 110023
India
Painting, reading
Any country

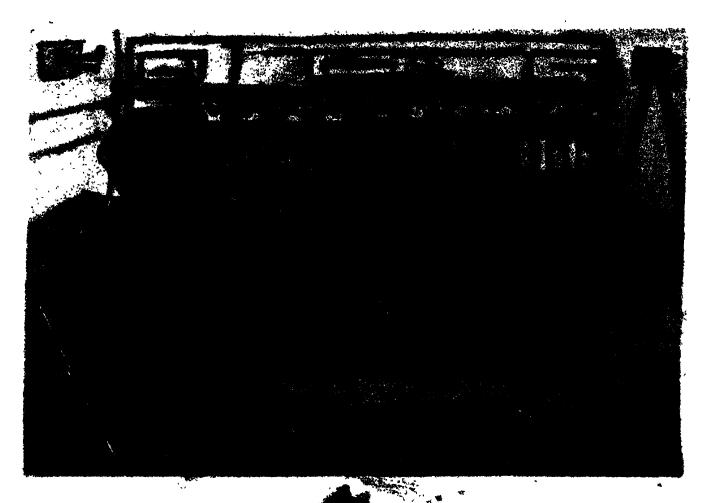
7504
Anuj Jain (16)
A/C-1-138C, Shalimar
Bagh
Delhi 110052, India
Travelling, dancing
India, Germany

7505
Aditya (15)
H.No. 7, Ashoka Colony
Karnal 132001, Haryana
Painting, playing the
harmonica
India

7506
Rohit Gupta (16)
c/o Mr. Ashok Gupta
6260/11 B.D. Compound
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Ambala Cantt. 133001
Haryana, India
Stamps and coins
Any country

Edited, Printed and Published by Vaijayanti Tonpe at the Indraprastha Press (CBT), New Delhi on behalf of the Children's Book Trust, from Nehru House, 4, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110002.

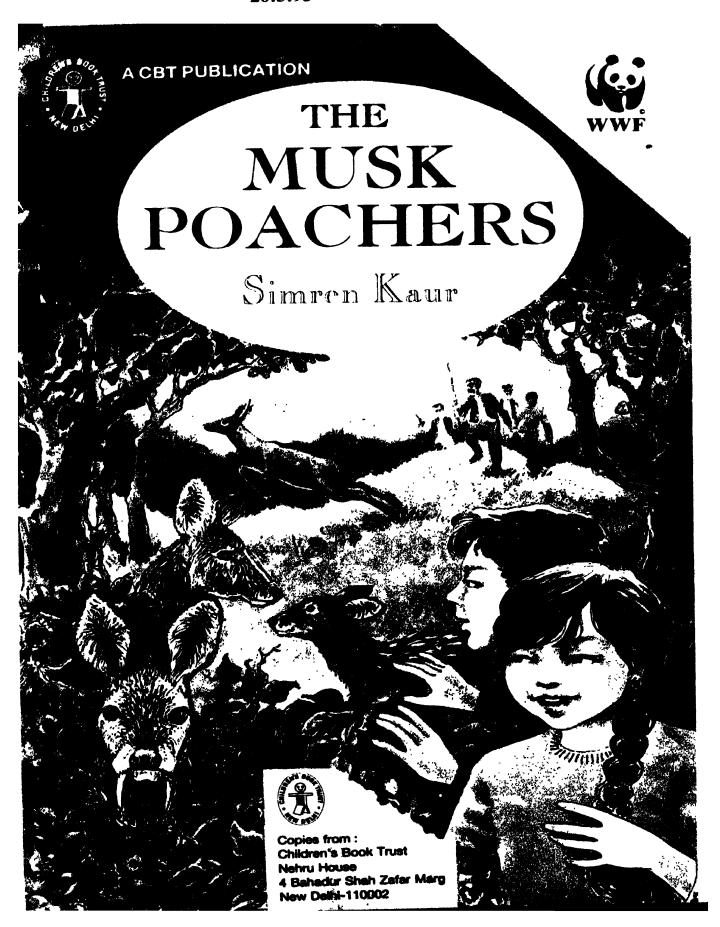




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Last Date: July 31, 1995

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Founder-Editor SHANKAR Editor Vaijayantı Tonpe Asst. Editor Bhavana Nair

Design and LayoutSubir Roy

Circulation & Advertisements C.P. Ravindran

Area Representatives BOMBAY C.H. Viswanath 502-A, Arun Chambers, 5th Floor, 317, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Opp -Fort Market Bombay 400038 Telex . 78050-ASCO IN

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JULY, WHEN THE RAINS COME (Fairs and Festivals) O.P. Bhagat

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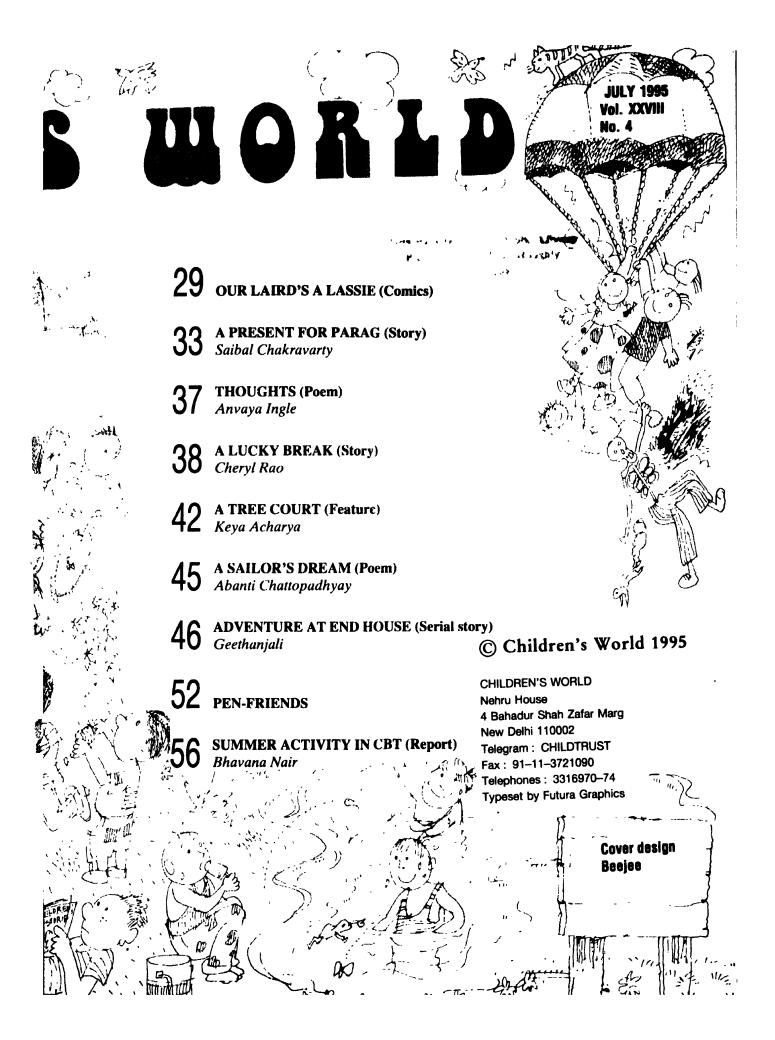
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Dear Editor...

I am a 12-year-old girl, from Dinjan near Tinsukia. I have an elder sister, Manu. I am in the eighth standard. While I am interested in being a doctor, my sister wants to be an engineer. I really like Children's World and have already read all issues of Children's World in our library.

Tanvi Marwaha, Dinjan I am very impressed by your magazine. I have thought of ways to improve my magazine after reading yours. You see, even I am editing a

Following a summer that has been as relentless as this year's, the coming of the monsoon should indeed be greeted with song and dance. Maybe nothing of the grandeur of Meghdootam and Ritusamhara has done the monsoon or the seasons proud, since Kalidasa's times but Nature's creatures have never found it difficult to express their joy or gratitude. So, the peacock dances as the clouds appear and the frogs and toads croak as the first drops begin to rain down...

For the major part of the summer holidays most

magazine. But of course, it is very small and is just for passing time. It s name is *LEAFLET*.

Shruthi A. Jayaram, Secunderabad

Tonic in Torment

When nothing is with you—
Hope, sure, is.
When none is by your side—
He, certainly, is.
Say not:
"I am the sufferer only."
Think not:
You are all alone and lonely
Stop brooding:
Instead, turn around and
observe:

There are millions like you, Many more, far worse than you.

+

Get up and rush to them:
Give them your helping
hand—
A sweet smile—a word of
cheer—
A loving look—and a
warm hug.
A miracle shall occur:
Half your worries will
vanish—
And you shall find
yourself
A new man—a better being
A far far healthier person...
Sheona Sauna,

Dear Readers...

of you may only have kept track of the rising temperature, or spent listening intently for the tap to let out a hiss of steam. that passed for water in major cities. Some others, we do know, were busy penning their pieces for the YOUR PAGES special issue in November. With the last date—July 31 looming large on the horizon, we are sure those whom the monsoon has inspired, will be sending in their masterpieces well before D-day.

When adults lose no time in filling in every

newspaper, magazine and TV show with their considered opinions, why should children—the special ones of this world, be denied a chance to have their say? So out with your ideas, your papers and pens. Get set to make the world of adults sit up. And while vou are at it, let those letters follow too. It is what you have to say about what you want to see in each issue that shapes it into your magazine, your world.

Happy reading and inspired writing...

EDITOR

Pune

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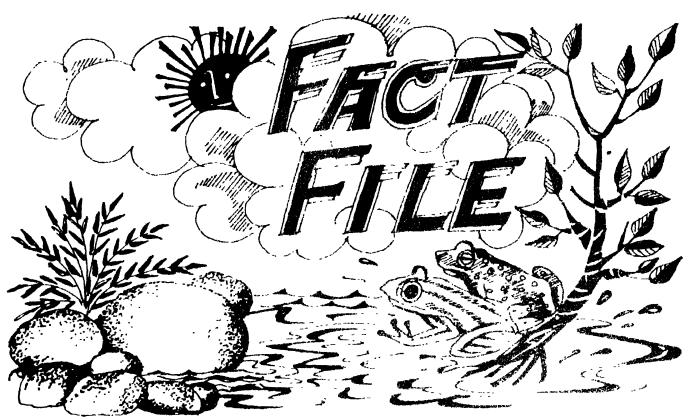
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Illustrations: Sudakshina Ghosh

Kalidasa's 'Meghdootam' is considered to be the ultimate tribute in Indian literature to our very own climatic condition—the monsoon.

Every cloud has a silver lining, yet clouds and rain mean or meant different things to different people. Wordsworth thought a cloud is lonely' as it 'floats on high over vales and hills'.

Children, would like rain 'to go to Spain' and 'come back when' they 'call it again'.

The sight of clouds make peacocks spread out their tails to dance in splendour.

The splish-splash of rain, makes toads scurry out, dressed in their best warts—looking for human princesses perhaps, who would kiss them into human princes.

Aesop may have titled his tale 'The Frog Prince' but almost all illustrators of the story prefer to depict the 'frog prince' as a nice, huge, warty toad.

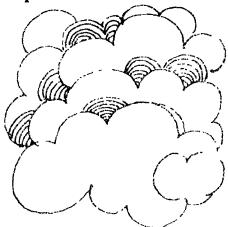
So here are some facts about these interlinked phenomena for your file.

A CLOUD is a mass of small water droplets or tiny ice crystals that float in the air. Clouds play an important part in the earth's weather. The water they bring is necessary for all forms of life. Most clouds change shape continually.

Scientists give names to clouds that describe their type.

Cirrus clouds are curly white.

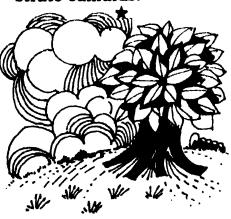
Cumulo clouds are piled up masses of white clouds-





Stratus are clouds that appear in sheets or layers.

The clouds seen nearest to earth are stratus and strato-cumulus.





RAIN is a form of precipitation that consists of drops of water.



Each raindrop differs from another in size and speed of falling.



The larger the raindrop the faster it will fall. The approximate size of the usual raindrop is 0.02 to 0.25 inch. Rain is necessary for life because it provides water for human beings, plants and animals.

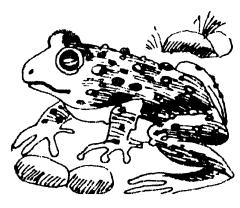
Rain cleans the air by washing off dust and chemical pollutants.



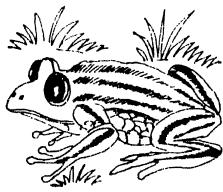
A TOAD is a small tailless animal closely resembling a frog. Toads have broader bodies, drier skin, shorter, less powerful back legs. Nearly all frogs have teeth; toads have none.

True toads make up the toad family, Bufonidae, although frogs and toads belong to the scientific order Anura or Satientia.





True toads are commonly covered with warts but true frogs have smooth skin.



True toads unlike true frogs live mainly on land and go to water only to breed.

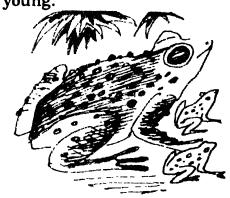
Toads avoid direct sunlight and heat. They are most active during the night or on rainy days.

There are over 300 species of toads.

African live-bearing toads are the only toads that do not lay eggs. Females give birth to the young.







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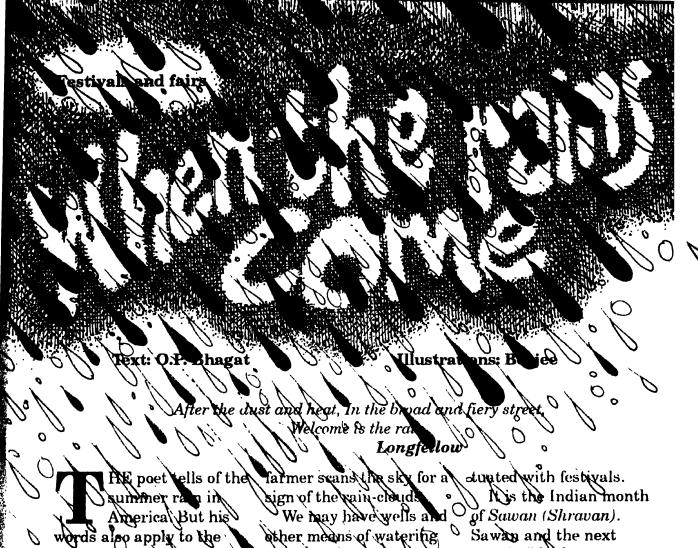
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first monsoon rath at the end of the long, hot sum mer in our country

To the southern tip of ; India the monsoon c around June 1. And it starts moving northwa It reaches Delhi by June 30.

In other words, most of the North has another month of the hot weather. It is a trying time. For June is often hotter than May.

Slowly, in the countryside, the fields become parched. The cattle find less grass to eat and less water to drink. Daily the

the fields. But mouth of our farming depends on the

At last dark monsoen clouds show themselves in the distance A wave of jox runs around.`

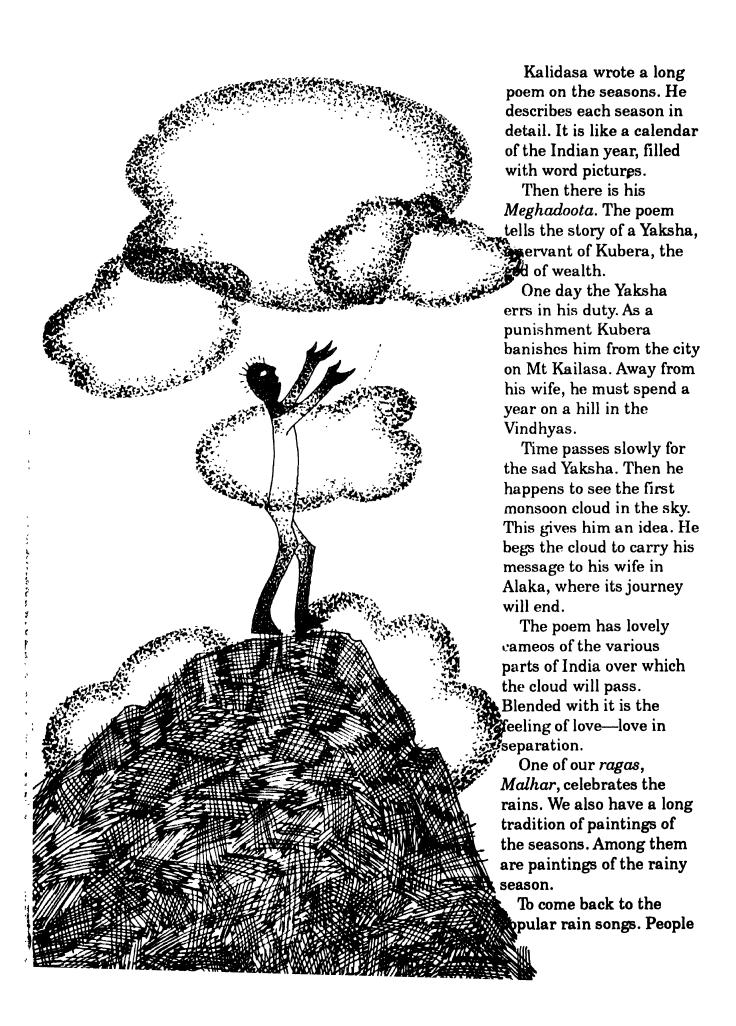
Asit rains, the world changes, as it were. The hot wind turns cool. The dry soil slakes its thirst. New crops are sown. At the same time, new grasses and plants come up everywhere.

There is new hope hope of plenty. The heart is happy. The mood is merry or festive. Indeed, the rainy season is punc-

month, Bhadon (Bhadrapad) are our twin rainy Months. As they bring cheer and joy to millions, they are celebrated with music, song and dance.

We have a rich poetry of the seasons. Much of it is about the rains.

Celebrating the monsoon in verse goes back to the Rig Veda, the oldest book of India. In it we have many hymns and legends of rain. The epic, Ramayana, too has beautiful descriptions of the rains besides the other seasons.



start singing them the moment they see clouds in the sky or even before that. For some of the songs are like magic chants, sung to hasten the hesitant rain.

As the clouds spread overhead, boys and girls shout and dance. They also put swings on trees. Swinging under a cloudy sky or in a drizzle is an age-old way of proclaiming one's joy at the coming of the rains.

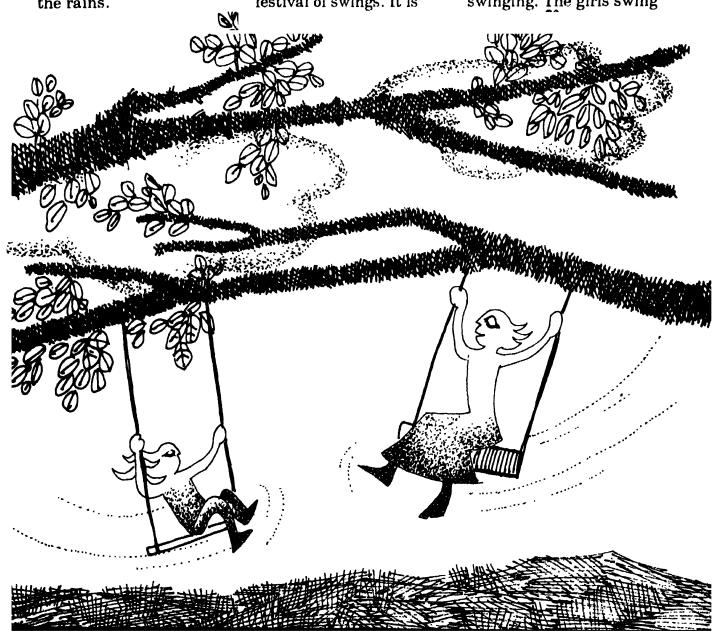
There are 'swing' songs too. Many of them are songs of joy and mirth. Many others are songs of love and longing. We have a swing raga, Hindola, too.

Singing and swinging goes on through Sawan to Bhadon. But singing and swinging are almost always associated with Sawan.

Arid Rajasthan and the nearby areas have a festival of swings. It is Teej, the third day of the bright fortnight of the moon in Sawan.

It is a festival for girls and they celebrate it with fervour. Married girls visit their parents' homes. They wear new clothes and shining glass bangles. Also they colour the palms of their hands with henna. Sweets and savouries are made and shared with friends.

Above all, there is swinging. The girls swing



together in courtyards or out under the trees. And they sing Teej songs.

It is a festival to welcome the life-giving rains. But like the State's festival of *Gangaur*, it is also dedicated to Parvati. It is believed that on this day the goddess leaves her parents' home to go to her husband, Shiva.

In Jaipur, Teej is a big day. Women in their finery go out in a procession.

They sing songs in praise of Parvati Close behind them come decorated elephants and camels.

This is one of Rajasthan's main tourist draws of the season.

The Myna tourist complex in Rohtak (Haryana) also celebrates Teej in a colourful way.

Cities like Delhi have several Rajasthani clubs. Each holds a five-star Teej fete. One of their highlights is a mehndi or palm-painting (with henna) contest.

Music centres put up concerts of rain songs. Dance groups stage ballets on the *Meghadoota* and similar themes.

Then there are Shravan fairs and festivals at some places. One of these is at the Sri Rangi temple at Brindaban, near Mathura. The temple is dedicated to

There is an interesting story behind the festival. Once Vishnu sent his elephant to collect flowers. In its search the elephant stepped into a river. A fierce crocodile caught one of its legs in its jaws.

The elephant struggled

Then it prayed to Vishnu for help. Vishnu came flying on the back of his bird mount, Garuda, and rescued the elephant.

Effigies of the elephant and the crocodile are floated in the temple tank. The rescue is also enacted.



Gajendra-moksha, as the legend is called, is the theme of many paintings and decorative panels in temples.

The rainy season is rich in fruit. What dominates the market is the mango in all its varieties. It is the king of Indian fruits. And monsoon is the time to honour the 'king'.

A big mango festival is held at Saharanpur. Besides the varieties of the fruit from all over India, many mango products are also on display.

Delhi Tourism too has its mango festival. From small, unbelievably small, to large, even overlarge, varieties are there. It is like a kingdom of the mango in a huge hall.

Add to these the mango products—jams, pickles, chutneys, ambpapad (mango toffee) and mango drinks.

Haryana Tourism makes it a mango as well as litchi festival at Yadavindra Gardens at Pinjore, 22 km from Chandigarh.

Some city hotels have their own mango festivals. Here the accent is on mango dishes, mango sweets, mango ice-creams and mango drinks.

Naga Panchami is the day of the snake—to be

exact, the fifth day of the bright fortnight of Shravan.

If the snakes are feared, they are also worshipped, as they have an important place in Hindu myth and legend.

Vishnu rests on a couch of the coils of the manyheaded serpent, Ananta, or Infinite. Shiva wears a necklace and other ornaments of live snakes.

Some of the female snakes are charming maids. Such a one was Ulupi whom Arjuna married. There are so many snake stories that they will fill a whole book.

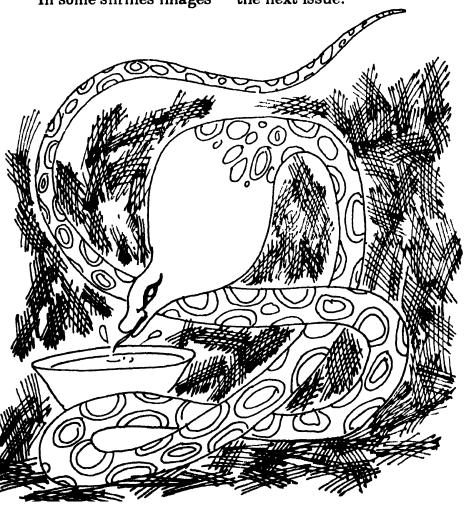
In some shrines images

of snakes or snake-gods are worshipped. Many people go there on Naga Panchami day. As a gift, they leave milk for the snakes to drink.

Another name for the festival in U.P. is *Ghuriya*. The word means doll. At sunset on that day crude cloth dolls, dyed yellow, are thrown into a pit. Boys then beat them with sticks and have fun.

This seems to be a remnant of some old snake ritual.

There are some festivals in the rainy season. But they fall in the month of *Bhadon*. About them in the next issue.





Dear teachers and teacherers,

If you have been wondering, if at all you've been worried, if at all you asked yourselves, where I was last month, what had happened to poor ol' me, then listen hard, listen to my tale of woe, my friends and remember every moment of your life, how lucky you are you are not me.

As I write this, I wince with pain. My right leg bears a dark red scratch, about eight and a half inches long, or maybe nine and around my left ear, there is another, dark red scratch, a semicircle, this time with a diameter of about four to five inches.

Along my left upper arm, there is a dark red square with an area measuring two square inches and below that a rectangle of two by one and a half inches. Now the reason I'm saying all this to you and giving you the measurements in inches and not in centimetres is because I'm not in my right mind, I'm wholly and entirely shocked at the way Lini, our cat behaved with me, I can't believe that she did what she did to me. To me, who has fed her and clothed her (sorry, I don't think I've clothed her) anyway, fed her and well, fed her.

Yes, as you can guess, the reason I've become a series of geometric figures is because of Lini. Lini, our cat, the cat. The cat, that's all I shall call her. The cat. Not Lini, not our cat, the cat, that's all.

Of course, I quite understand it's not Linsorry, the cat's fault. In fact, considering everything, the cat behaved very well. I mean, imagine how you, if you were a cat, would feel, if you, a cat, were forced to learn arithmetic. And learn arithmetic from the poorest of arithmetic knowing people on the face of this planet, Raghu-Raghu, for whom rectangles and triangles look the same, who thinks a diameter is a sort of diamond and the radius, a sort of collective noun for the sun's rays.

Yes, yes, I know I'm getting into geometry again and not talking about arithmetic but when I see the eight and a half, nearly nine inch long scratch on my right leg and the... Anyway, as I was saying, how would you feel if you were a cat being taught arithmetic by a mixed up, decimal dotted, square bracketed, fraction divided gunk of an ass? You wouldn't feel too good, let me tell you.

For one thing, you would have to be sitting inside a bucket. A rather

wet bucket because it had just been used for washing clothes. Secondly, you, if you were a cat, would have been held down by me, who was just about to become several pages of a geometry book. And thirdly you, still a cat, would have had to face a series of large, messy sheets of cardboard which said things like 2+2=4, 16+18=24, 20-12=6 and 15x7=56.

Now, much as I would have liked to have, for the sake of Hypotenuse and Pythagoras and probably Archimedes as well, much as I would have liked to have corrected the maths

on those messy bits of paper, I couldn't. I couldn't because I had to keep Lin... the cat, down in the bucket while Raghu jammed those earthshattering equations into her nose and bawled them into her ear.

No cat can take it. This cat didn't. This cat screeched, passed a dangerous claw down my right leg marking it with a dark red line measuring eight and a half, nearly nine inches, then drew a semicircle around my... anyway, as I was saying, the cat drew geometric figures on me and fled. And the boy, that dratted

boy yelled at me for having let her get away.

Yelled at me. Me who was in pain and bleeding red blood along my leg, around my ear, along my arm and nursing in my hidden heart, a deep sense of hurt and unhappiness because... anyway why go on?

I wince with pain as I write. I'm merely a chapter in the geometry book and the cat hasn't learnt arithmetic. And that boy? Grrrrh!

Yours in inches, Perky





TRUSCIONA



Story: Padmaja Menon

Illustrations: Prasanth A.V.

T was terrible. There was hardly a trickle lacksquare of water in the taps. Mrs. Chandra could not believe it. Oh dear, what could have happened? She had been in that area for the past two years and so far had not had to face a water crisis. And to be made aware of the shortage at the eleventh hour. She should have been more careful. Now what could be done? Her children would be home soon. And first they would rush to the bathroom. Oh, dear, may be the sump (underground water reservoir) would have some water. She should be able to lift some water. The recent power cuts and short supply of corporation water should have warned her of the impending water shortage. She should have realised something was wrong when her servant had asked her for water to

carry home. Also her neighbours had taken water from her.

Wearily she raised the sump lid and her heart sank. The water level was very low. At the most she would get two buckets. Anyway that would temporarily solve matters. And if in the evening the corporation water came, fine. Otherwise? The children wasted such a lot of water—when they brushed their teeth, the tap would be running; when they bathed, the shower would be continuously running. She had warned them so many times, but they had been nonchalant. Now what would they do?

She went out and saw women carrying plastic kodams(vessels similar to matkas) running hither and thither in search of water. It seemed that for the past three days there had been no water supply—only those with sumps had survived. It was in the papers too. "Didn't you know?"

"Power shortage—so no water pumping etc. etc."

"How long will it go on?"
"No idea."

A dejected, Mrs. Chandra cooked some food and waited till the children came. She explained the situation to them and patiently listened when they let out a tirade of accusations at her.

"Keep on supplying to the mohalla and now what will we do? Who will give us water?" asked Rashmi, the wise one.

Rattan remembered how many times Mom had asked him to save water. And he had not listened.

He would just stand under the shower for hours together. He would keep on washing his cycle with more water than necessary, he had even tossed water all over the walls of the bathroom just for fun. Rashmi also had similar thoughts in her head.

That day they managed somehow with the two buckets. They did not bathe, Mom did not wash clothes either. The rabbits were given only one pot of water. Their hutch could be washed later. Some water had to be saved for the next day from the two buckets!

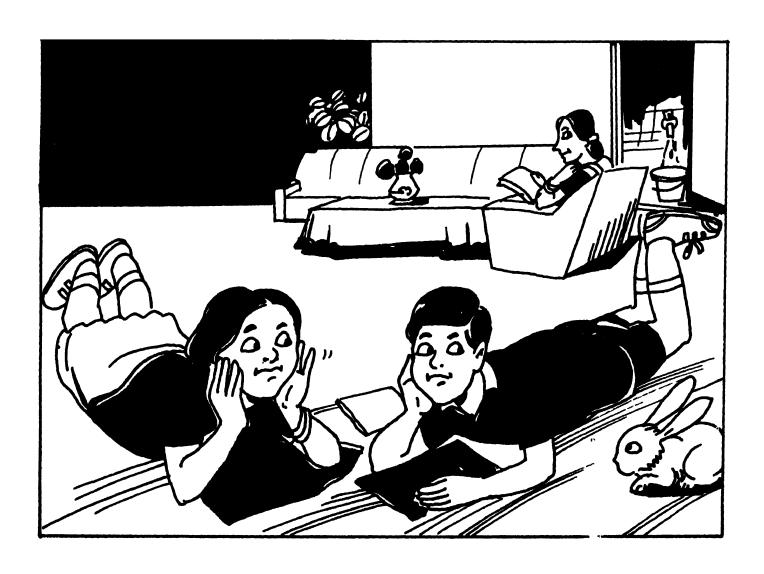
The next day, a holiday, found Rashmi awake at dawn. She peeped into the sump. No water. That meant another dry day. Mom was desperate. She decided to go over to one of their relatives and spend the day there. After a bath and lunch they returned with a bucket of water—as a safety measure. But that day too there was no supply of water.

Next morning the maid had no water even to wash vessels. Mom asked her not to come till water came. But Pattamma said she would manage some water from a borewell. So within an hour Pattamma and her daughter trooped in and out with four kodams of water, finished their work and left behind two kodams full for emergency.

"You have always given me water, Amma, I can't forget that," said Pattamma.

Mom looked at her children who looked abashed.

"At least today we should have some water,"



predicted Pattamma when she left.

The rabbits were also looking sorry for themselves by mid-afternoon. The heat was unbearable. The fan was running at full speed, the children sprawled on the floor reading, when suddenly Rattan jumped up. He had heard the sound of water.

"Mom," he screamed.

Mom came running.
The children were lifting the lid of the sump. And sure enough water—a thin trickle but water—oh, heavenly water was falling!

"Hooray, at last-at

last," yelled the children thankfully.

The rabbits hopped up and down.

Mom sat down heavily—in relief. She hoped that the worst was over.

"I will bathe first," said Rattan hopping with the rabbits.

"OK, get ready soon, we will celebrate today," smiled Mom.

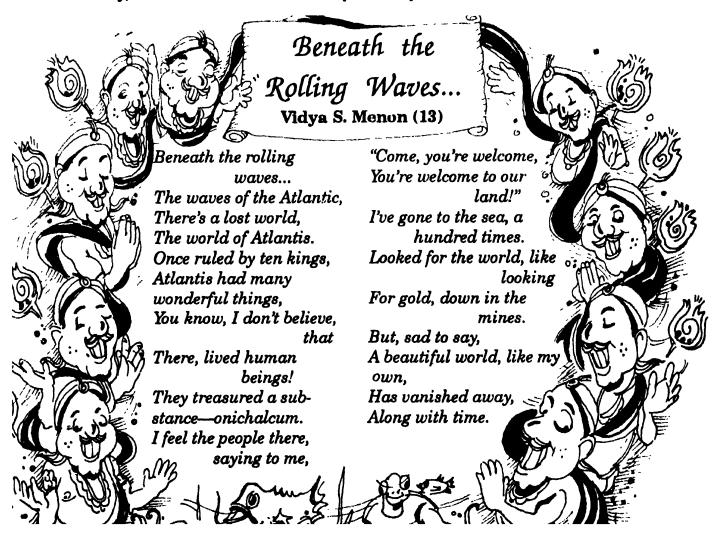
"Good old Mom," cheered the children and laughed when Mom chided, "Old? Who is old?"

They hugged her tightly and rushed to get ready. Mom was pleasantly surprised to find them ready in a trice. No lingering or singing in the bathroom. No wastage of water either. May be her children had learnt their lesson—the hard way. Oh, well, every cloud has a silver lining. And may be the past troubled week had been worth it.

She was sure of it when they knocked at the bathroom door and cautioned her, "Mom, don't waste water. Fill up the bucket and mug and use water from that and not directly from the tap.

Right!!!"

Well....well....well....





L. Balasubramaniam

though we failed to see how that was so, for the baby had never allowed her to take any liberties

with him.

HEN the people downstairs had a baby we did not dream that he would become so popular with us. He was like any other baby, a large, moonfaced fellow with a pink, wrinkled face, toothless grin and bald pate.

Mother was the first to make an acquaintance with him. Though the baby refused to allow her to lift him up, and bellowed lustily every time she made soothing faces at him, Mother was strangely excited after her first visit. "That was a very good beginning with the baby," she told us,

The next of our family to meet him was myself. The baby was lying sullenly in his cradle. He was gesticulating fiercely with his limbs. A ferocious scowl adorned his bright little face. I patted his soft, brown head lovingly and he was instantly outraged. With a cry of shocked surprise he glared at me. 'How had I dared to touch his royal person?' was the question that was plainly written on his face. I had the further impertinence to make comforting noises at him, and this he could just not tolerate. It

was adding insult to injury. Immediately he summoned all his powers and burst into a terrible howl of rage disguised

inadequately in a baby's cry.

Poor me! I was thoroughly frightened. The crafty brat's show was so realistic that for a moment it almost convinced me that I had somehow hurt him. It was only when I saw that he quietened down as soon as his mother came that I realised that it was only his vanity and pride that

אסטווו מומסוו מיישר ---

had been hurt.

After this rather intimidating first experience, I became a bit wary of the little imp downstairs. But Mother herself was undaunted. She had dealt with millions of uncompromising babies, including us, and was an old hand at the game of taming wild infants. Soon a protracted session of cajoling, bribing and scolding began and at last Mother won The baby was, within a month, eating out of her hands.

But I managed to make very little headway with him. Each time I approached him, honestly with nothing but benevolent intentions, the baby would start bellowing lustily. For some reason he had developed a marked dislike for me. I decided to give him a wide berth, though I envied Mother's success.

Mother had always believed in a myth that the first word that any human baby speaks is "ma". We had argued vainly with her on this, for she would successfully silence us with what she called a "practical demonstration".

"You can ask so and so "friend of mine," she would say triumphantly. "The

first word her baby uttered was 'ma'."

We would be quelled by the force of this irrefutable evidence. We were, therefore, on the look-out for babies whose first-spokenword was not 'ma', so that we could beat Mother at her own game. Little did we know that what we had been searching for, vainly so far, was under our very roof. The baby downstairs proved to be an exception in this respect too.

The first word that he very prematurely spoke was not 'ma', as my mother had confidently prophesised, but 'papa'! We were much elated at this and the baby downstairs instantly became our favourite. But Mother was inordinately disappointed. Of all the words, why 'papa', was what she simply could not under-

stand. We could and were secretly pleased that the baby had said 'papa' and not any other word. Mother had nothing but contempt for menfolk.

Gradually the baby downstairs grew up. More and more of his peculiarities began to surface. His likes and dislikes were strange, so were his habits, which were most unbabylike to say the least. He learned to read and write when only two, and did not cry when sent 's school. He loved his doctor and hated his ayah, fought with other babies but was amiable in the company of adults. He preferred books to toys and was not mad about toffees.

Have you ever heard about, let alone seen, a baby who could surpass in oddities my little friend (fiend?) who lives downstairs?







Story: Sukhendu Dutta Illustrations: Dinesh Banduri

T was a lovely, moonlit night. Halumba's sleep broke in his lair. He opened his eyes, stretched himself and yawned a big, big yawn, "Augh, ughhh!"

He wanted to sleep for some time more. But he was hungry. He had had no barking deer cried an kill for the last ten days. How could he sleep in peace? Slowly he rose and let out a terrific roar, "Ooooongh! Aungh!"

The loud, resounding cry shattered the silence of the night. The forest awoke with a start. All

wild creatures, large and small, knew that the king of the jungle was on the prowl. They trembled in fear.

"Aiow! Aiow!" called the hinds to each other in quick succession.

"Khrr! Khrr!" the alarmed bark and ran for its life.

"Dhank! oo-onk!" bellowed the sambar.

The monkeys screamed, "Harre! Hok, Hok!"

And a jackal sounded a long drawn out call, "Phnew! Phnew!"

Halumba laughed with pride. He was the lord of the jungle! Over all the forest he held absolute sway. His slightest gesture had caused such a panic in the jungle!

He lifted his nose to sniff the jungle breeze in search of a prey. He advanced cautiously. Not a twig snapped and not a dried leaf rustled under his great paws.

The full moon was in the sky, bathing the whole forest in bright, silvery moonlight. Looking up at the moon, Halumba started singing, in his hoarse voice, a song in praise of the moon.

Suddenly he stopped. His eyes gleamed and his ears pricked up as he looked at a clearing among the trees. There, in the clear moonlight, a rhinocalf was standing!

Halumbaknew well that all young animals of the forest follow their mothers. But the rhinocalves always precede their mothers. And in doing so, they fall an easy prey to the tigers!

Halumba crouched behind a bush. He looked to his right, and left and behind, and crept forward carefully. "Only a few steps more!" he said to himself.

Suddenly he heard a thud, a crash, a snort and a roar. Halumba turned his head and halted for a few moments. A huge rhino tore through the jungle and emerged from the cover!

The alert mother rhino was aware that the tigers were a menace to her calf. She cast a long look at Halumba and took a few steps forward. The huge creature, with her peculiar folds of armourlike skin, sniffed the air and greeted Halumba with her frightful call, "Ghot-ghot-ghot!"



The two animals looked at each other for a while. Halumba swished his tail and took another step. At this, the mighty, one-horned animal, lowering her massive head, rushed straight at Halumba with an angry snort.

A charge was imminent. Halumba hesitated for a few moments. Would it not be foolish to face so formidable an enemy with such a fearful horn on her snout?

But before he could decide, the mother rhino, with threatening growls and a violent thud, charged him like a rolling hill! In the twinkling of an eye, Halumba jumped to his feet and ran out of her way. The mighty animal was more than a match for him. It was better to leave her alone!

Sadly Halumba looked at the rhino-calf from a distance and sighed.

He walked on.
Suddenly the sight of a
mother elephant with her
calf, brought him to a
halt. His flaming eyes
burned greedily as he
looked at the fleshy baby
elephant!

The mother elephant kept wandering here and

there, helping herself to leafy branches of trees. Halumba advanced towards the calf to whisk it away. Sensing danger, the baby elephant let out a shrill alarm call.

That was enough to send the mother elephant into action! The sight of Halumba advancing towards her darling, made her furious. She hid her calf under her belly and challenged the charging tiger with an excited scream, "Aunghaha! Ooough!"

There was a moment of confusion. The mother elephant struck her trunk against the ground and charged Halumba at a terrific speed. Halumba jumped back to beat a hasty retreat. The mother elephant kept on waving her trunk warningly with terrifying trunpeting. "Tri-aa-a-ank!..."

Halumba stood still. He was panting. Elephants were his only enemies in the forests. They avoided each other as far as possible.

A gentle wind was blowing in the forest. Halumba raised his face and looked up at the moon. From high up in the sky, the plump white moon was casting its glow on the forest. On such a



beautiful, moonlit night, he wanted to sing a song. But how could he sing? His stomach was screaming. How could he enjoy the bright moonlight and the cool breeze on an empty stomach!

The gentle wind carried to his nostrils the sweet aroma of a deer. Halumba's eyes shot hungry fire. Oh, he would enjoy a tasty meal today! Halumba licked his lips with his tongue. He greatly fancied deer meat. Halumba sank low and started crawling forward on his belly to hide himself behind

grasslands. His stripes blended with the shadows of the tall grass. As he advanced towards the unsuspecting deer, the sweet aroma strengthened. Halumba's mouth watered in anticipation of the feast that was awaiting him!

Ah, there was the animal! A tempting child! Halumba's eyes burned when he saw the animal so close to him. He wanted to sneak upon the animal undetected. The final rush was to be made at flying speed.

But his tail betrayed him to the deer. Halumba was unable to control his tail in his excitement. It rose and moved from side to side. The chital, alert to every movement, noticed the tail and became suspicious. Halumba was about to spring forward, when the deer shrieked, "Aiow! Aiow!" It jumped over a bush and bounded away with the swiftness of the wind. In the twinkling of an eye the animal was far, far away!

Poor Halumba! He was not a fast runner and could not overtake a chital. He sighed, "Ughh!"

But Halumba was not to wait long. The scent of a buffalo was borne to



him by the wind. The animal was enjoying a mud bath in a shallow pool. Halumba sank to the ground and walked stealthily, with his belly close to the ground, through a clump of trees to escape the notice of the animal.

But the buffalo's senses awoke to the presence of danger. It raised its head and looked at Halumba.

"Oooo-ooough!"
Halumba roared. At once
the buffalo rose from the
mud and wheeled round
to face its enemy.
Halumba roared agair.
The buffalo stamped upon
the ground angrily,
glaring at him with its
red shot eyes.

"Wroof!" Halumba
roared again and
advanced cautiously. His
ears cocked up. His body
was tense with
excitement.

"Moo!" lowed the buffalo, accepting the challenge. It lowered its head. The two fierce horns glistened in the moonlight. The animal thumped the ground angrily. Halumba knew that was the warning signal of the charge!

Halumba wanted to charge back. Before he could decide, the buffalo ran towards him.
Snarling with fury it

charged Halumba wildly.

Halumba uttered a startled "Gr-a-ahm!" and jumped back to escape. He did not want to risk injury to himself. Once an arrogant buffalo had stabbed him with its murderous horns. The deep holes had taken months to heal.

Halumba retreated mournfully and walked away slowly. Suddenly he caught the scent of a wild boar. Halumba's yellow-green eyes glared when he saw the animal digging up earth for underground tubers. He stopped behind a thornbush. Halumba greatly relished boar meat.

"I'll have a nice meal today!" said Halumba. He crouched low and advanced slowly to face the animal. But the boar was a daring animal. He raised his head and stood motionless. His bloodshot eyes blazed with wrath and the upper lip curled. He was armed with canines like hunting knives and was not afraid of Halumba!

Halumba growled at the animal. In reply, the boar made an ugly grimace and grunted angrily. His hair rose all along his back and his deep-set, wicked eyes flashed with anger. Halumba advanced step by step, hesitantly. Suddenly the boar charged him with a hysterical shriek. His white tusk, curved upwards and shining like silver in the moonlight, flashed in the air.

Halumba sprang for his life. Before the rogue could turn and charge again, he drew back. He might get badly cut in his attempt to overpower the angry thing.

"Gr-rr-rr!" growled Halumba. Hunger was growing upon him. He could hear the rumbling and gurgling inside his stomach. But he did not know when he would be able to satisfy it.

Not long afterwards, Halumba heard a clatter coming from behind a bush. A porcupine! The rattling by its quills was music to his ears and stimulated his appetite. "At last I'll have a nice meal!" said Halumba. He eyed the animal hungrily. Porcupines, with a special flavour, were good to eat. "The full grown plump animal will make me a square meal!" said he to himself greedily.

Closer and closer came the animal, threatening all the carnivores with its rattling quills. Halumba, irritated by a gnawing appetite, stretched out his neck and was ready to attack it.

But the porcupine quickly turned to one side, erecting strong needle-shaped quills. The next moment it charged backwards with unbelievable swiftness. Halumba hastily saved himself from being impaled by the sharp quills. He gazed at the animal in dumb astonishment. How dare the little thing want to do battle with him!

But its sharp quills? The porcupine was certainly one of the best armed animals of the forest. He should think twice before attacking it. Once his cousin the leopard, had been badly crippled by a porcupine. It had driven its quills deep into the leopard's face and legs!

The porcupine moved again, rattling its quills. Halumba looked at the living pin-cushion in amazement! It was a pity that a mighty animal like Halumba was afraid of a little porcupine! He pulled up his nose in disgust.

"Aungh! Ughh!"
Halumba was hungry,
very hungry! No doubt he
could fast for long periods
of time, a fortnight if

necessary. But fasting was not popular with him.

Broken-hearted, Halumba walked slowly, looking around. Soon he stopped near a shrub of thick branches. A hare was nibbling at the young, green leaves of undergrowth. Of all the animals- -a hare! Ordinarily Halumba would have turned his head in search of a bigger prey. But today the pangs of hunger were too much to undergo. He had not eaten a scrap of meat for the last ten days. The little hare, at least, would be a tidbit.

He walked softly, hunger gleaming from his savage eyes. The soft, juicy thing was within his easy reach! Halumbá roared and was almost upon it.

The poor hare got quite scared. It fell immediately, face downwards, on the ground and lay motionless, as if it was dead!

Halumba looked surprised. Where was the a hare? It had vanished from his sight. He looked down, rolling his big eyes this way and that. But the hare had escaped his notice by keeping dead still.

Halumba bent his ears,

expanded his nostrils to sniff the air for the sound and scent of the hare. Yes, he could smell the animal, but could not see it! Halumba was puzzled by its sudden disappearance.

"Aung! Ugh! Ugh-aaa!" He shook his head with a long drawn moan. "Even the hare has fooled me!"

He turned back slowly, his cheeks sunken, "I'll never be able to hunt an animal in this cursed forest!"

Halumba hung his head in shame He would become the laughing stock of the jungle. So he left the forest, never to return, perhaps becoming a vegetarian. Who knows!



OUR LAIRD'S A LASSIE - PART 3





















HE WON'T BE GIVEN THE CHANCE, HECTOR! YOU CAN DEPEND ON THAT!















ANOHAR and Parag were friends. The big difference in their ages did not stand in the way of their friendship. Manohar, a poet, was thirty-five, tall and handsome. His cottage, Bahar, was a place of beauty with a garden and a parrot in the cage. The cottage was close to Parag's quarters near the railway station. Parag's father, Keshab, was a porter. Parag would often come to Manohar's cottage in the afternoons and spend some time with him. He would listen to Manohar's latest poem and tell him about his day in the school.

Parag who was eleven, had bright eyes, a mop of thick hair and a pair of strong legs. A good runner, he had won several prizes in the annual sports of his school. Apart from being a good athlete, Parag had a taste for poetry.

Manohar was not married. He had lost his father when he was in college. He now lived with his aunt, Malatiben. The old woman loved Parag, more because he had lost his mother when he was only seven. Whenever Malatiben made gulabjamuns or kheer, she would send for Parag to come and share it with



Story: Saibal Chakravarty Illustrations:

Beejee

them.

There were occasions when Parag would come to Manohar's cottage and find the poet out in the countryside. He would go to the kitchen where Malatiben would be busy with her cooking. He would talk to her about his new books, games and how he looked forward to the annual sports day. Malatiben would give the boy barfi, peanuts or some

other tidbit.

Manohar had a pet parrot, Muku, in a cage. The cage was hung at the end of the balcony under a sisam tree. Parag liked Muku. He thought it was a beautiful bird. He often went close to the cage and spoke to it. Muku could speak a few sentences like 'Good morning, Sir' and 'Hullo, how do you do'.

Parag's friends in the school often told him, "You are lucky, Parag. You have such a famous poet as your friend." What they did not know was that Manohar was a good

person, friendly and frank. 'Maybe all poets are like that,'thought Parag.

However, Parag did not like Manohar's keeping Muku in a cage. In his poetry Manohar spoke of the beauty of the blue sky and the joy of children. But he kept the bird a prisoner. Muku had never known what it meant to fly in the open. In this respect Parag thought Manohar was unkind and not true to what he wrote.

One day, while they were talking about birds and animals, Parag raised the matter of Muku's freedom. The poet was in a happy mood that afternoon. A collection of his

poems had just been published. The book had been well received. He presented a copy of My Offerings to Parag and said, "You may not understand all the poems now. But when you grow up you may like them. I want you to keep it for the future."

Parag took the book and said, "Thank you." Then after a minute he added, "Why don't you set Muku free, Uncle? Imagine how happy the bird would feel if it was allowed to fly."

Manohar looked at Parag intently and said, "But don't you know, this bird, this shade of sisam, and the flowers in the garden provide me the inspiration to write? If I change anything here, then I will not be able to write a single line. Imagine, how difficult it would be to live and not to write."

Parag thought for a while and said, "But, Uncle, in one of your poems you have said that one should think more of others' happiness than one's own. That is very important for all human beings."

"That's true," Manohar nodded. "But what is said in poetry cannot always be followed in life." He smiled and then, as if he



was letting out a secret to his young friend, continued, "Sometimes in order to get the right rhythm, the poet may use a word whose meaning may be slightly different from what he wanted to convey..." To explain his point further he said, "You are a good runner and have got a few prizes in the annual sports of your school. But all these years you were trying to win the district championship trophy and could not make it. This is life Parag, realities and adjustments..."

These words touched Parag. It was a fact that he hoped to win the district championship trophy awarded to the best runner but he had failed. Now to Manohar he merely said, "Thank you, Uncle, for the book."

From that day Parag took the challenge of winning the district championship trophy more seriously. I must prove that I can achieve what I wish for, he said to himself while coming out of Manohar's cottage. 'And then it may be possible for me to have what I want.'

December was an important month for both Manohar and Parag. The Kavi Sammelan and the inter-school sports compe-

tition were due to be held that month.

Manohar's new book,
My Offerings, was a grand
success. The organizers of
the Kavi Sammelan were
very impressed with his
work and they told
Manohar that he need not
submit any new poem.
"The book will be judged
as your entry for the
Sammelan."

The President of the Kavi Sammelan, himself a well-known poet, read out the first poem of the book. The judges appreciated it. At the end of the Kavi Sammelan Manohar was awarded the coveted prize.

The poet returned home with his heart full of joy. He expected Parag to call on him to congratulate him as the news of the award had been broadcast over the radio in its evening bulletin. But Parag did not come. At the dinner table Malatiben gave Manohar the bad news. Parag was upset. She said, "His sister, Maya, came in the afternoon. This year also Parag failed to win the district championship trophy...

Early next morning Manohar took a box of sweets and left for Parag's house.

"How is it, Parag, you never came to congratu-

late me?" Manohar asked the boy sitting on the terrace looking over the playground close to the school building. "You know I value your words more than the Kavi Sammelan citation..."

Parag was silent. How could he explain to Manohar that he was upset not because he had not won the trophy but over something else. If he had come out with flying colours then Manohar would have been so pleased that he would tell him, "I am very happy with your achievement, Parag. Tell me what present you expect from me."

"If you really want to make me happy then set Muku free," he would have said immediately. "That would give me the greatest joy..."

"Didn't you tell me the other day that we should care for others' happiness more than for our own?" Manohar touched Parag's shoulder. "Then why didn't you come over to my place and share these happy moments of my life?"

Before Parag could say anything, Manohar added, "Everything has its time, Parag. There were so many days when I stood before my father's photograph and sought his blessings... Each time I was unsuccessful it broke my heart. Then again I took courage and worked and now I cannot believe it has really come." His voice trembled as he spoke.

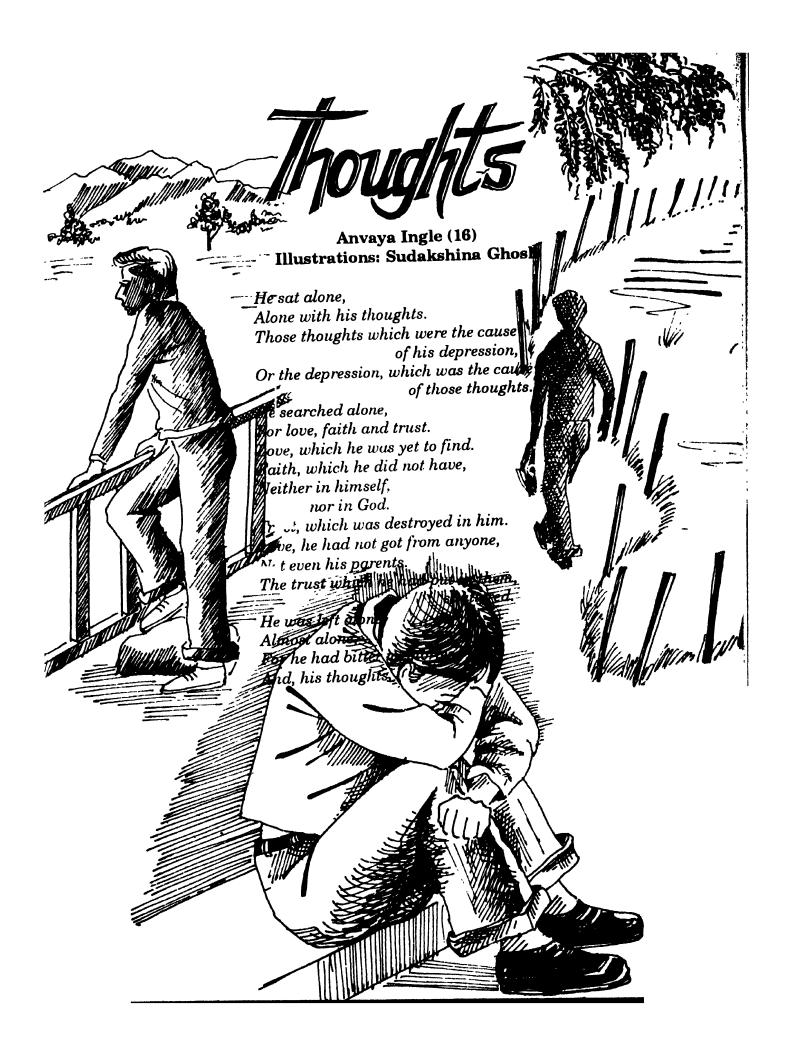
"Now come with me," suddenly there was a cheerful note in his voice as he took his young friend's hand in his.
"There's a small present for you at my place..."

They took a cyclerickshaw and reached Bahar in ten minutes. Manohar walked straight to Muku's cage and opened its door. The bird took a few hesitant steps towards the door, flew out into the open and sat on a branch of the sisam.

"That's my present to you," Manohar pointed a finger at the bird now up in the air. "I know you have been seeking its freedom for many days. But you may be surprised to learn that in setting it free I feel happy, too. Now tell me, my dear friend, how do you feel about it?"

'It's as beautiful as your best poem, Uncle," Parag said, overwhelmed by Manohar's deed and words. Looking at the endless blue where the bird was now making countless flights, Parag did not say what he felt very strongly at that moment. That the happiness in seeing Muku set free gave him the strength and hope to win the district championship trophy at the next annual meet. That might be his turn to make his uncle happy.





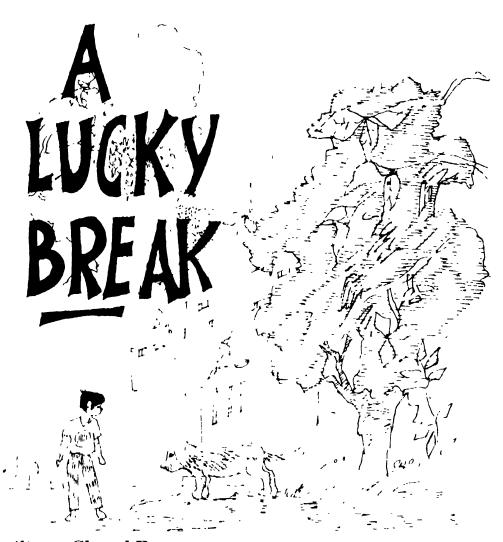
ALIT was all alone at home when he heard the noise. At first he thought it was Honey and he went in search of her. "Honey, Honey, where are you?" he called, looking under the beds and sofas and finally finding her fast asleep under the dining table. He stopped and watched her for a moment for she often 'talked' in her sleep as she dreamed of her youth. But now she was silent and he knew that the cry he had heard was not from her.

He opened the front door and went out on to the small patch of lawn. He could see nothing. Then, from under the hedge, the sound came again and Lalit stared in astonishment at a little, brown puppy that looked at him with sorrowful eyes. It opened its mouth and whined sadly, as if to say, "I'm lost. And cold. And hungry. Help me."

"Oh you poor little thing!" cried Lalit. "Where is your Mama?"

There was another whine in reply.

Lalit wanted very badly to lift the puppy and hold it in his arms, but he had often been



Story: Cheryl Rao Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

warned by his parents never to touch stray dogs and puppies—no matter how attractive they looked and how friendly they seemed.

He had an idea. "Wait here!" he said to the pup, and ran into the house for some milk. He poured a saucerful and brought it out and placed it in the centre of the lawn. The inviting smell brought the puppy out from where it cowered and it staggered to the plate, put its face

down and lapped up the milk. Lalit squatted in front of it and watched happily.

As soon as the milk finished, the puppy raised its snout and looked beseechingly at Lalit. There were drops of milk on its whiskers and it looked so appealing that Lalit could not help himself. He put out his hand and patted the puppy. Suddenly the gate opened and his parents came in from their walk.

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Honey pushed the front door open with her head and came out to greet them. At the same moment that her tail began to wag, she caught the unfamiliar scent and saw the tiny creature with Lalit.

Honey let out a deep growl and in two strides was almost upon the puppy. The puppy saw the huge black and tan Alsatian bounding up to it, seemingly ready to swallow it in one gulp, and it let out the most pitiful shrieks and flew back under the cover of the hedge. There was bedlam! Lalit screamed, "Get away, Honey! Leave it alone."

Mrs. Naik cried, "Come here Honey!"

Mr. Naik shouted, "What is that animal doing here?" and above it all could be heard Honey's furious barking and the puppy's piteous cries.

Lalit parked himself between Honey and the hedge. Mr. Naik quickly grabbed Honey by the collar and took her in, and then Lalit ran to him, "Oh Papa! Please let us keep it. Please! Please! You know I've always wanted a pup!"

Mr. Naik looked at him in astonishment.

"How can you have always wanted something you already have? When Honey is here to love and protect you, I can't see any reason for getting another dog."

"But Pa, don't you understand? Honey has always been a grown-up dog for me. I've never been able to play with her and look after her. She never wants to play. She just sleeps all day and goes out for a walk with you in the evenings. She's not my companion. Please let me keep this one."

Mr. Naik looked at Lalit's mother. She smiled at her son's desperate appeal, but she was about to say, "No son, Honey will not take kindly to a puppy about the house," when Mr. Naik nodded at Lalit and said, "Okay, you can keep the puppy."

Mrs. Naik turned a surprised face to him and Lalit cheered. Mr. Naik added, "I will take the pup to the vet and ask him to check it thoroughly and give it all the immunisation shots, deworming and other things. And you'd better keep it in the shed until Honey gets used to it."

"Oh thank you, Pa, thank you. Thank you," Lalit jumped into his father's arms and hugged him.

These holidays were going to be full of fun, he thought. He had two whole months to spend with the puppy. "I'll call it Lucky!" he said aloud.

The next few days flew past for Lalit. He discovered that Lucky was a male. Lucky was dewormed, given his first immunisation shots and properly introduced to Honey, in the hope that the two would make friends. But Honey did not take kindly to the puppy. She growled whenever she saw Lucky and snapped if he came too close to her. Lucky kept at a safe distance from her.

Honey's eyes followed Lalit about, but he was unaware of her. She had been two years old when he was born and by the time he was old enough to understand and play with her, she was a mature dog- too old for frolicking and rolling on the grass, that Lalit would have liked. He would look at Honey's photographs when she was a puppy and long for her to be small again.

Sometimes he'd trouble her until she squeezed under the bed for peace and quiet.

But now, seeing the way he followed Lucky about and spent his entire day playing with him, Honey felt left out. She was twelve years old. No longer quick on her feet or as alert as she had been when she was young. But she continued to need attention and affection infact, as she aged, she needed it more and everyone in the house seemed to have turned their attention to Lucky. She didn't like it one bit. And she didn't like Lucky. She refused to

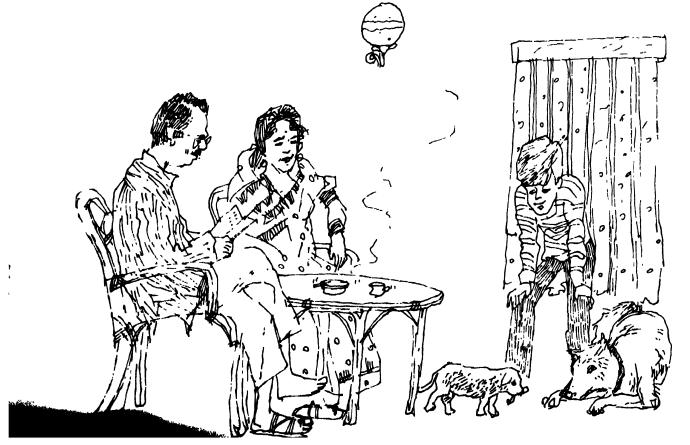
tolerate his advances and jerked out of the way when he ran up to her on his plump little legs.

It soon became obvious to everyone that Lucky was not going to grow tall. He stayed short and sweet, but he had boundless energy, a great capacity for tricks and a warm and generous heart. He wanted to be friends with the large, old dog.

As he gnawed at his bone, he could see Honey licking her lips—and on the spur of the moment, he took his bone to her and dropped it at her feet. Honey was too surprised to growl. She

had not had a bone for years. Her teeth were too weak for bones and she had gone back to the diet of her infancy mashed food and mince. She sniffed at the bone-then licked it—then held it between her paws and gnawed at it. She knew that she could not do justice to it as she would have some years earlier, but she held it for a while; then pushed it back to Lucky.

From that day, the atmosphere in the house changed. Honey was no longer sullen and ill-tempered. She accepted Lucky's presence and tolerated the noise that he and Lalit made as



they ran about together. She rested her huge, handsome head on her paws and dreamt of the days when she had run about like Lucky was running now. When she'd been young, she had not had Lalit to play with her like this. He had been a toddler, climbing onto her back, pulling her ears and tail and troubling her until she had finally gone into hiding. Ah, those had been good days. Honey dropped off to sleep.

Lucky found her like that, snoring differently and seeming to take each breath painfully. He yapped at Mrs. Naik, calling her attention to Honey's condition. Honey was rushed to the vet and his face was grave as he examined her. "She's old. Her heart isn't strong. Now she has pneumonia. She isn't likely to recover."

When Mr. and Mrs.
Naik came home with
Honey, Lalit could make
out from their faces that
something was
desperately wrong. He
could not believe that
Honey was going to die.
He burst into tears. He
hadn't realised how
much he had taken
Honey's presence in his
life for granted. She had

always been there. He could stay away from her for hours, even days at a stretch, and she wouldn't complain, unlike Lucky who pawed at him whenever he was inattentive. And then. when he remembered that she was there and touched her soft fur in passing, her tail would thump slowly and happily. Not to have Honey around! Impossible! Even Lucky could not take her place, Lalit realised.

There was something so calm and reassuring about Honey. She didn't create a din and bark at passers-by as Lucky did, but when she emerged and stood beside Lucky, her majestic figure made both of them seem larger than life. "I will look after Honey and make her well again," cried Lalit.

He was as good as his word. For days, he hovered around Honey, giving her her medicines, talking to her, trying to make her have some soup. With him was Lucky, who suddenly seemed to have grown up and sobered down. The small, nondescript brown dog snuggled up next to Honey as if to say, "Here, take some of my

strength. I have plenty to give."

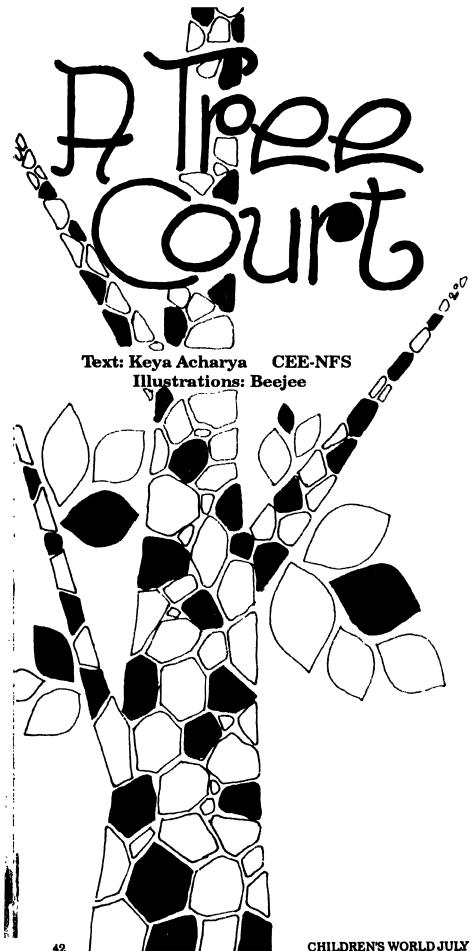
Mr. and Mrs. Naik watched Honey suffering and tried to tell Lalit that she should be put out of her misery. But Lalit was adamant. And slowly, from the brink of death, Honey started coming back. Her fever abated, her breathing became easier, she responded when she was spoken to. Lucky still stuck by her side, nudging her back to health, bracing himself on his short, sturdy legs and helping her up.

It was a happy day for all of them when Honey at last walked a few steps on her own. She was just a shadow of herself, but when the vet saw her, he was amazed, for he had not expected her to live.

"She had a very lucky break," he said.

Lalit laughed. "A LUCKY break indeed," he said. "We were lucky when Lucky came into our lives, weren't we, Honey?"

Honey gave a soft bark and licked Lucky's ear. She was glad that the troublesome little fellow had entered her life and she hoped they'c be together a long time!



YOUNG man, with a face still wearing innocence, had been sent by his father to represent his case in court. Their garage was nine feet long, but the tree's girth took up four feet of it. He now found it difficult to manoeuvre his car into the garage. The car tended to get scratched. So they wanted to cut the tree. The tree warden was summoned to the apex table where the jury presided. The rest of us sat facing the jury. The warden had been sent earlier to the house to evaluate the situation. His opinion was now sought: what did he now have to add or detract from the facts presented?

The tree was a beautiful mahogany at least 30 years old, judging by its girth, he said. He had seen the car; it had received a minor scratch only once. Besides, he did not think it impossible, if one were careful, to steer the car clear of the tree into the garage.

The judge looked at the youth. Why not start loving the tree instead? Family members' quirks and inconveniences are tolerated by other members; a 30-year-old mahogany was definitely a family member. The jury

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rejected the youth's appeal. But the youth's innocent smile was still in place; he had not, in any case, really expected to win his case.

But judicial authority in a Tree Court called by Bangalore city's Forest Department (Urban) in the state department's Aranya Bhavan is not so commanding yet. The court is only five months old and has had seven sittings so far. The representatives from a temple trust refused to accept the court's rejection verdict. Arguments flowed, strident protests from the temple authorities and persuasive ones at the juror's end. An old tree was apparently inconveniencing the temple authorities. While the warden believed their claim had no substance to it, the temple authorities would have none of the personal inspection business.

So persuasion was then tried. In the old days, said the judge, who is the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Bangalore Urban, temple trees were a haven for man and animal. Gurus preached in their shade, cows rested under the trees, whilst birds sheltered on its branches. So why should we destroy our

cultural traditions? But counter-arguments reached a high pitch. The DCF promised a personal visit to reassess their claim.

And that is a tree court. where trees of all shapes and sizes come to life in the courtroom, awaiting the dispensation of justice. The scheme itself is novel. says the DCF. Mr. Jayaram. Anyone wanting to cut a tree has to apply to the Forest Department for permission. The tree warden then inspects the site while a date for hearing the case is fixed. Around 25 applications are dealt with in one sitting.

Whether everyone in the city knows that permission is needed for cutting a tree is debatable. However, most people I asked seemed to know that cutting a tree is illegal, it is not clear as to what needs to be done. Mrs. Sampath, a sociologist who lives in Rajmahal Vilas, was an applicant who did not know at first whom to apply to for permission, but deduced it must either be the city corporation or the Forest Department. Mrs. Sampath had applied

Mrs. Sampath had applied for permission to cut off some branches of a tree on the pavement which were intruding onto her terrace.

Permission was granted in her case but was refused to her neighbour, Dr. Reddy, a professor of aerospace medicine at the Indian Institute of Science. The same tree's roots were blocking his sewer drains. But the problem was solved without cutting the tree. Dr. Reddy says he is inconvenienced but "we have to live with it". His point is that one must have the right type of tree planted in residential areas. The tree in question was a rain-tree with roots and branches that keep spreading, creating problems in most cases.

The DCF admits that suitable trees hadn't been planted previously. The city corporation had planted this particular tree 30 years ago possibly with no inkling of the population explosion that was to follow in Bangalore. Mr. Jayaram now probes into long-term ecological implications of tree species that are currently being planted. Mahogany is found to be suitable as it has deep roots which do not bother structural foundations. Hibiscus, Meikeila sampige, Spathodia and the Bauhinia family are all considered appropriate for the city.

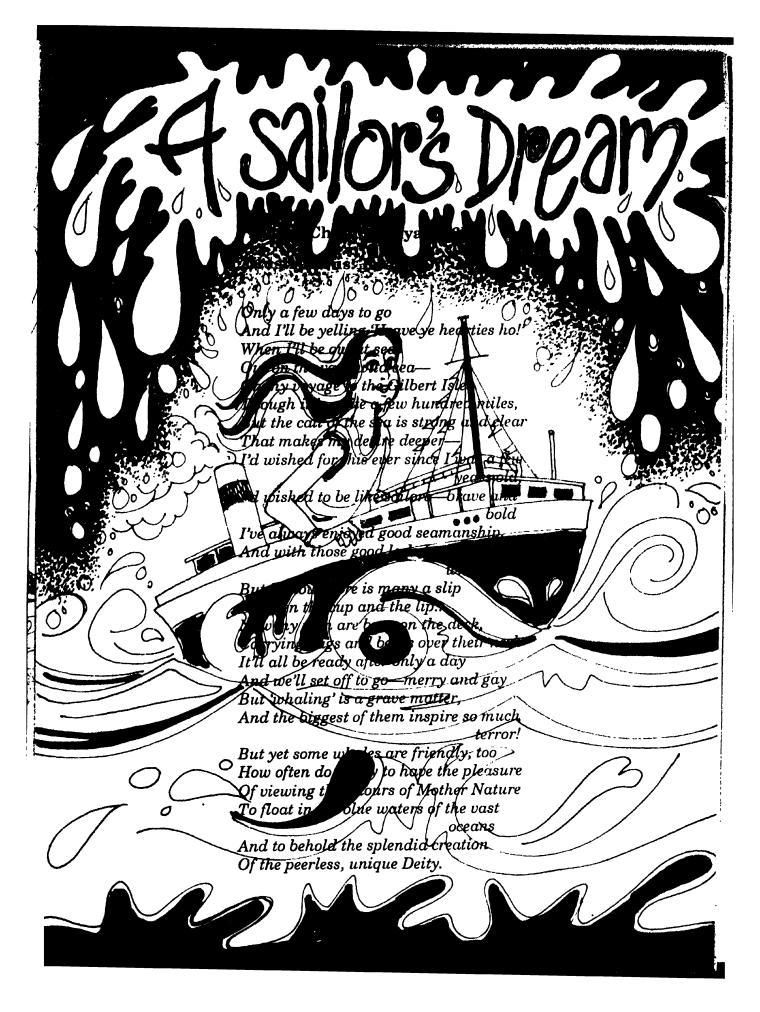
However, to get back to the tree court: what happens when a verdict is flouted? The warden in charge of the case is made responsible. There are, at present, 300 volunteer wardens from all walks of life who are trained by the Forest Department. Disobeying the law invites a penalty of Rs. 5,000 by the Department and prosecution in a court of law. However, it is most

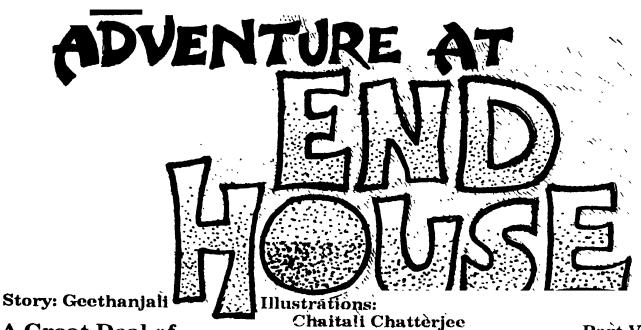
certainly demanding of the existing staff's inspection and monitoring capabilities. Funds from institutions and societies besides government sources are going into fencing and de-silting Bangalore's remaining water-bodies.

Mr. Jayaram feels that a wireless network, which is in the pipeline, will help greatly in improving patrolling efficiency.

Lack of awareness regarding tree-cutting procedures remains the main issue. A recent immigrant to Bangalore chopped down a termite ridden pavement tree that had begun spreading into her home. She was quite unaware of the Forest Department's directives regarding tree-cutting. She plans to make up by replanting a tree on the same site before the coming rains.







A Great Deal of Excitement Part VII

Manisha, Sheetal, Vivek and Sidharth find a friend in Miss Daisy, the new occupant of End House. Miss Daisy's cousin, Marie, arrives in Madras to collect her mother's jewellery. Marie's sister, Anita, comes to meet her Shiela, Anita's twin, is suspected of attempting tosteal the jewellery. End House is all the more vulnerable because Snapper, Miss Daisy's ferocious dog, is sent far away. Matters take a curious twist when Shiela calls from Trivandrum. The children are puzzled....

"Sheila? But she can't be calling from Trivandrum. She is here in Madras. You must be joking, Vivek," Siddharth declared.

Vivek shook his head, "No I'm not. The call was from Trivandrum. The operator said so distinctly. The caller said that she was Shiela. Do you know something else? Her voice sounded rather like Anita's—you know deep and pleasant."

"I remember Aunt Daisy telling us once that the twins had similar voices too," Sheetal said suddenly.

Manisha nooded, "Yes, but where does all this

leave us? Do you mean to say that Sheila has given up the idea of stealing the jewels and has gone back?"

Vivek looked thoughtful. "She sounded as though she was not even sure Marie had reached Madras. I think she never came to Madras."

"But we saw her here, didn't we?" Sheetal asked in shock. "Don't you remember seeing her at the bus stop, Vivek?"

Siddharth had been silent so long but now he said slowly, "I think that could have been Anita. After all the twins are identical."

Manisha looked doubt-

ful, "Then why didn't she recognise us?"

Vivek looked excited, "Perhaps she wanted us to get the wrong idea—that she was her twin. Do you remember how she told us that she had run into her twin at a book shop? She knew that we were going around the hotels enquiring about Sheila, so she must have boarded the bus we took. When we saw her and called out to her, she pretended not to hear. We came to the conclusion that she was Shiela. Let me tell you that we never came upon Shiela again. No, if you ask me, Shiela never came to Madras at all. Anita

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lied that she saw her at the book shop."

"Why should she do that?" Manisha asked.

Siddharth said eagerly, "Can't you see? Anita must be the culprit, not Shiela. It must have been Anita who planned to steal the jewels. Anita perhaps made use of the fact that she and her twin are identical, to throw suspicion on her unsuspecting twin."

Manisha let out a deep breath, "I believe you are right. She was at End House all along, so she knew all the plans. She was not with us when everyone in Gandhi Lane was busy watching Snapper chase Duchess. It must have been Anita who broke into End House. When she did not find the jewels, she pretended that she had been out shopping and had run into her twin."

"Yes, she then joined us at your house, Manisha," Vivek said. "She heard Aunt Daisy tell us that the jewels were in the locker. So she bided her time and waited for her sister, Marie, to come. In the meantime Snapper presented a problem. It isn't easy to steal and escape, when a dog like Snapper is around..."

"Why should that

matter? Snapper adores Anita and would never bark at her even if she was to escape with the jewels," Siddharth pointed out.

"Yes," Manisha agreed,
"But maybe she wanted to
bring in an accomplice."
Sheetal said, "Yes, someone rang up Aunt Daisy
while Anita let out Snapper. So she must have an
accomplice."

The sound of a car's door banging shut made the children turn towards the window. "Shall we tell Aunt Daisy and Marie about our suspicion?" Siddharth asked.

"No, after all we have no proof," Vivek said. "But we shall give her a hint. Here they come!"

Marie and Miss Daisy came walking up the path, talking and laughing merrily.

"Aunty, we had a call from Trivandrum. It was your cousin Shiela who called. She said that she would call tomorrow," Vivek said.

Miss Daisy was taking a big box from her bag. She looked up briefly and said, "You must have got it wrong, Vivek. Shiela is in Madras. Anita saw her, remember?"

"But she called..." Vivek began and stopped short as Anita herself entered. "Daisy, I have something important to tell you," she said. Her eyes fell on the jewel box and she gave an exclamation, "So you brought them. Can I have a look?"

"Sure," Marie said smilingly. "Children do you want to see my jewels?"

"Wow! these are beautiful, aren't they?" Anita gushed as she took up a set of rubies. There were ruby earrings, a necklace and a ruby bracelet. Marie looked at the diamonds which sparkled and twinkled brightly, "I love these diamonds. Our mother used to wear these diamonds on special occasions. Do you remember, Anita?"

The three women drooled over the jewels until finally Anita gave an exclamation, "Oh, I forgot! Daisy, Snapper has escaped from my friend's house. I was taking him for a walk when he pulled at the chain and ran away at top speed."

Miss Daisy pursed her lips. "I have a feeling that he will make a beeline for End House."

Anita looked a little startled. "Do you mean he will come here?" she asked. "I don't think it is possible. My friend's house is miles away."

"He will come even if it

takes him a week," Miss Daisy said positively.

When the children were alone in Sheetal's garden, Sheetal asked fearfully, "Do you think that Anita has hurt Snapper? The tale she told about Snapper running away may not be true."

Vivek thought deeply and then said, "I don't think that. She was taken aback when Aunt Daisy suggested that he would come back."

"We should keep watch tonight.... Anita will surely steal the jewels. She may get an accomplice to help her. We never warned Aunt Daisy about Anita. Do you think we ought to have?"

"We tried to, didn't we? How can we possibly do so when Anita is always hanging around?" Siddharth asked. "We will watch End House tonight and if we see or hear anything funny, we will rouse the doctor or Mr. Mahadev. This time I shall come along with you."

Vivek smir ked, "I bet you will snore your head off tonight too."

"I shan't," Siddharth said indignantly. "Sheetal are you coming too?"

"Yes, of course," Sheetal said determinedly. "We will go at ten, won't we? I



shall try to slip out without being noticed by Dad. Let us go now. Meet you at End House at ten."

Siddharth did not go to sleep that night. Realising that he would not be able to wake up once he slept, he sat up in bed with a book. Vivek was fast asleep and did not even hear when the clock struck ten. It was Siddharth who shook him awake.

Together the boys ran over to End House. They found that the girls were already there. The children tiptoed to the tree where Vivek and Manisha had sheltered the previous night. Manisha kept an eye open for Ginger but he was not to be seen. They sat silently for what seemed ages. The clock struck twelve and Siddharth stifled a yawn, "I suppose we were wrong after all. Anita has not run off with the jewels..."

Vivek was just about to doze when a car drew up before End House. Vivek stiffened and held up a warning hand. The driver sounded his horn once sharply. After a minute the front door of End House opened and the children saw Anita framed in the doorway. Sheetal let out a deep breath as the driver left the car and

came stealthily towards End House.

The children crouched behind the huge tree and watched as a burly, thick-set man walked towards the front door. "You are on time, Rajan. God! I was afraid you would be late," Anita said. "Have you got the gun? Come in."

Rajan went inside. Anita shut the front door.

"What do we do now?" Manisha asked trembling with excitement. Vivek sounded breathless as he said, "Siddharth, run and ring up the police. Sheetal, you go and rouse the doctor. Manisha and I will go and bolt the front door so that Anita and her friend cannot escape." Sheetal sped off to rouse the doctor or her father. Siddharth ran to his house to ring up the police, Vivek and Manisha tiptoed towards the front door. Then something terrible happened. Vivek, who had a nasty cold, felt an enormous sneeze coming up. He stuffed his handkerchief in his mouth trying to stop it. It only made things worse and started off a series of quick sneezes.

In the twinkling of an eye the door opened and Rajan came out. His jaw dropped when he saw the children.

"Run, Manisha," Vivek screamed. The two children ran for their lives but it wasn't long before Rajan caught up with them.

Manisha yelled at the top of her voice but Rajan gave her a sharp rap and said, One more sound and your friends will die. Get inside."

Vivek and Manisha walked to End House wordlessly. They were horrified to see Marie and Aunt Daisy tied up.

Anita stood before them, brandishing a gun. "Welcome to the fold, children," she greeted.

Marie and Miss Daisy looked horrified on seeing the children, "What are you doing here at this time of the night?" Marie demanded.

Anita turned towards her, "Hand over the jewels or you won't see these children again."

There was a moment's silence, then Marie said finally, "The jewels are in the black bag in my room. Let these children go, Shiela!" Rajan bounded upstairs.

Miss Daisy asked suddenly, "What have you done to Anita, Shiela?"

Vivek turned towards Miss Daisy, "This is Anita, Aunt Daisy. Shiela is in Trivandrum. Do you remember that I told you that we had a call from her yesterday? It is Anita and not Shiela who is after the jewels."

Anita turned towards Vivek, "Very smart, aren't you? One more word from you and Lshall..."

"Vivek, are you crazy? Anita would never do such a thing. This is Shiela, of course," Marie said decidedly. "Poor Anita, I wonder what has become of her."

Manisha opened her mouth to speak but just then Rajan came down with the jewel-box. He opened the box and his eyes gleamed greedily when he saw the jewels twinkling and shining in the light. "Hand me the jewels, Rajan, and tie up these children," Anita ordered.

Rajan handed over the jewels and proceeded to tie up Vivek. He was rough on the boy and Vivek winced as the rope cut into his hands, Manisha waited tensely hoping that the doctor would come before the two thieves escaped with the jewels. It was then that she heard the sound—a deep and joyful barking sound. She looked at Miss Daisy and saw that she too had heard the sound. Miss Daisy looked up in

surprise. Tears welled in her eyes. Only one dog could bark like that— Snapper. Manisha looked at Anita. She had not heard the sound. "It is Snapper. He has come back," Manisha screamed.

Anita jerked her head in surprise. The hand that held the gun trembled. "Hurry, Rajan, let's run out of here before that dog comes in. Leave the girl alone," Anita shouted. Rajan dropped the rope in his hand. Manisha saw her chance and ran to the front door. Anita ran after her. Manisha just managed to throw the door open before Anita pulled her away. "Snapper, here boy," Vivek shouted from his place trying desperately to untie the ropes.

Before Anita could close the door, an angry black form hurtled into the house. Snapper saw Rajan, the only stranger in the room, and flung himself on him. The man yelled in pain as Snapper buried his teeth in his leg. "Anita, call off this dog. I told you to kill him. You would not listen because you love dogs. Now look what has happened!"

"Save yourself, Rajan. I am going before anyone comes here." Anita clutched the jewels and ran towards the door only

to bump into the doctor's large frame. The gun went flying from her hands, "What is going on here?" the doctor wanted to know. "Sheetal told me something about thieves being after some jewels but I couldn't understand head or tale of the matter." He stopped and asked suddenly, "What's that?"

That was the sound of the police van arriving. Siddharth and Mr. Mahadev arrived on the scene along with the police. They proceeded to untie the two women and Vivek. Anita handed over the jewels dumbly to her sister. Marie stared at the scar on her wrist and said, "You are Anita, not Shiela. Why did you stoop to such a level. Anita?"

"I need money desperately. Rajan is my husband. I always expected that mother would give the jewels to Shiela and me. I spent all the money she gave me. I was shocked when she left all her jewels to you. Luckily she did not make a will but handed over the jewels to Daisy. Shiela was also shocked. She openly showed her displeasure. I tried to steal the jewels in Dehradun. Shiela was suspected as she kept saying that she

wanted the jewels. When I learnt that Marie was coming to End House, I knew that I had to try again before the jewels were taken away to Australia. I tried to direct all suspicion to Shiela, pretending that I saw her here, pretending to be Shiela when I bumped into the children at the bus stop. A friend of mine rang up Daisy imitating Shiela's voice. While Daisy was busy on the phone, I let Snapper out hoping that he would get into trouble and be sent away. Rajan wanted me to kill Snapper but I love dogs and would not hear of such a thing. When everyone in Gandhi Lane declared that Snapper should be sent away, I took him to a friend's house. If he had not escaped while I was taking him for a walk, I would have taken the jewels and escaped to Singapore as Rajan and I had planned."

As Anita finished her confession, a policeman led her away to the waiting jeep. Rajan was also led away. Everyone in Gandhi Lane stared at them wordlessly, as they were taken away by the police.

The doctor clapped the children on their backs,

"Smart work, kids." Mr. Mahadev nodded

Grandmother rapped her stick on the ground and smiled proudly at the children. Aunt Maya came out with Titan and smiled her appreciation.

"I think that all credit should go to Snapper for his help," Vivek said bending down and stroking the dog. To his surprise Snapper allowed himself to be stroked.

"He is a sport. If he had not come running all this distance and reached End House at the right time, Anita would have escaped with the jewels," Manisha said.

Vivek suddenly turned towards the doctor, "Can we ask you a favour?"

"Of course. I can't refuse you now, can I?" the doctor smiled and every one else in Gandhi Lane nodded.

"We all want Snapper to stay here with Aunt Daisy," Siddharth said guessing what it was that his brother wanted to ask.

There was a moment's silence. Then the doctor said, "I think we ought to agree. Snapper has proved himself today."

The children went mad with joy. Tears streamed down Miss Daisy's eyes. Marie who was still holding the jewels forgot herself and began to dance around in happiness.

Sheetal flung her arms around Snapper. "Did you hear that, Snapper?" she asked the startled dog. "You are to stay here. We will all share you and mind you, we shall keep a strict watch over you to see that you don't get up to mischief."

Snapper gave her a wet lick on her nose much to her surprise. "We had a nice adventure but the best part is..." Vivek began and the other three continued, "that Snapper has become friends with us."

Snapper looked surprised and the children could not help but laugh to see the look on his face.

Concluded



PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

7507
Reeba John (12)
Qtr. No. 653/3
Near A.G.E. B/R Estate
Dehu Road Cantt.
Pune 412101
Maharashtra, India
Gardening, painting
U.S.A., France

7508
Sulekha Banerjee (15)
c/o Shri S.K. Goswami
Charulata, Sindhya Nagar
Durg 491001
Madhya Pradesh, India
Sketching, reading
U.S.A., Africa

7509 Mittal Shah (15) 9-A Sylvan Lodge Colony 1st Cross, 1st Floor Kilpauk, Madras 600010 Tamil Nadu, India Modelling, painting Any country

7510
Prabhjot Kaur (14)
8 Dashmesh Nagar
Police Line Road
Tripuri Town
Patiala 141001
Punjab, India
Music, making friends
Any country

7511
Jovita Jasmine (12)
502 Bhagirathi
Jangid Complex
Mira Road (E)
Thane 401107

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENROLMENT FORM

MemberNo (To be fille	,	
Name: Mister / Miss		Years
(IN BLOC	k letters)	
Address:		
Hobbies:	•••••	
Pen-friends wanted in (Country)		······································
*Age limit: 16 years		Signature

GIRLS

Maharashtra, India Skating, swimming U.S.A.

7512

Namrata Jha (13) II/6 Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 1 Dehu Road 412113 Maharashtra, India Gardening, sports U.S.A., Japan

Payal Bhartia (14)

7513

St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani 412805 Dist. Satara Maharashtra, India Pen-friendship, reading

Any country

7514

Varsha Patra (14)
St. Joseph's Convent
Class IX
Panchgani
Dist. Satara 412805

Dist. Satara 412805 Maharashtra, India Dancing, skating U.K., U.S.A.

7515

Purvi Shah (14) St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani 412805

Dist. Satara

Maharashtra, India Dancing, music Any country

7516

Tena Philip (15) St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani 412805

Dist. Satara

Maharashtra, India

Dancing, music Any country

7517

Ritu Madan (16) 37-C DDA Flats Masjid Moth

New Delhi 110048, India

Stamps, reading Any country

7518

Jagruti Raut (14) St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani 412805

Dist. Satara

Maharashtra, India Skating, stamps Any country

7519

Tasneem Mala (14) c/o Manama Farms &

Foods P.O. Box-41

Panchgani 412805 Maharashtra, India Dancing, music Any country

7520

Gale Gomes (12) St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani 412805

Dist. Satara

Maharashtra, India Stamps, stickers Mauritius, India

7521

Wrutiya Botre (13) St. Joseph's Convent School Panchgani 412805

Dist. Satara

Maharashtra, India Nature, computers

Any country

7522

Kamal Sakhare (13) c/o I.M. Sakhare Works Manager Fuse Shop, Ordnance

Factory

Ambajhari, Nagpur 440021

Maharashtra, India

Sketching, making friends

U.K., Germany

7523

Preetha Chandran (14)

"Spring Dales" Kannamkulangara Tripunithura 682301

Kerala, India Music, dancing Any country

7524

Vidya Sivan (14)

'Kailasam'
Indira Nagar
Kadavantara
Ernakulam
Cochin 682020
Kerala, India
Reading, music
U.S.A., Ireland

7525

D.L. Nathali Gowda (14) St. Mary's Hostel

Falnir, Mangalore Karnataka, India Writing poetry, movies

Any country

7526

Meghna A. (13) Garud Niwas

Opp. Bajaj Tempo Ltd. Akurdi, Pune 411035 Maharashtra, India Painting, mountaineering

Japan, Singapore

BOYS

7527 S. Hari Ram (14) 29/C IInd Main Road C.I.T. Nagar Madras 600035 Tamil Nadu, India Reading, collecting facts Japan, Switzerland

7528
Naresh Aswani (14)
F/B-18 Lajpat Nagar
Sahibabad
Dist. Ghaziabad 201005
U.P., India
Reading, pen-friends
U.S.A., Japan

7529
Sachin Bhalerao (12)
c/o Mr. S.A. Bhalerao
Central School No. 1
Dehu Road, Pune
Maharashtra, India
Drawing, photography
U.K., U.S.A.

7530 Arun Rathi (14) Kuber Sadan Pilani 333031 Rajasthan, India Reading India, Japan

7531
Ankur Mahajan (15)
EB-512 H.P.S.E.B. Colony
Sunder Nagar
Dist. Mandi
Himachal Pradesh 174402
India
Stamps, pen-friendship
Other than India

7532 Amit Bhoi (12) Sch. No. 3149
Gomati House
Sainik School
Bhubhaneswar
Dist. Khurda 751005
Orissa, India
Stamps, reading
U.S.A., Japan

7533
Gaurav Khera (14)
BA/4A DDA Flats
Ashok Vihar, Phase 1
Delhi 110052, India
Drawing cartoons, sports
Any country
7534
TS N.V. Presed (12)

T.S.N.V. Prasad (13) s/o Mr. T. Bhogeswararao Near Poornima Theatre Mudine Palli Krishna Dist. 521325 Andhra Pradesh, India Stamps, acting Any country

7535
Aniruddha Thema (9)
s/o Alok Kumar Singh
Surendra Kutir
Punjabi Pech
Mathura 281001
U.P., India
Playing, reading
Any country
7536
M. Viigu Shekhar (16)

M. Vijay Shekhar (16)
s/o Mr. M. Anand Babu
Mundhur Anjinappa
Compound Millerpet
Bellary 583101
Karnataka, India
Singing, collecting posters
U.S.A., Russian
Federation

7537
Anuj Garg (12)
c/o Mr. P.S. Raj
41 Saket, Meerut 250006
U.P., India
Cricket, stamps & coins
U.S.A., U.K.

7538
Rishikesh M. Bilgi (15)
s/o Sub. M.D. Bilgi
2 CBPO, c/o 99 A.P.O.
Calcutta, India
Reading, sports
Any country

7539
D.K. Dharmesh Kumar (11)
D-6, Labour Colony
Gurady, Madras 600032
Tamil Nadu, India
Stamps and coins
Other than India

7540
Kumar Pradhan (16)
Jigme Sherubling High
School
P.O. Khaling
Trashigang, Bhutan
Pen-friendship, sports
Any country

7541
Vimal Singh Moria (14)
D-292 IFFCO, Udaynagar
Gandhidham
Kutch 370203
Gujarat, India
Collecting music, penfriendship
Any country
7542
Anil Kamlesh (15)
58 Krishnappa

Agraharam Street

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BOYS

Near Amman Koil Madras 600079 Tamil Nadu Watching TV, dancing India

7543
K. Sirish (13)
D.No. 7-9-41
Narasaya Agraharam
Bhimavaram 534021
Andhra Pradesh
India
Cricket, pen-friendship
Any country

7544
J. Anil Kumar (13)
s/o Mr. J. Mohan Rao
Rly. Qrts. H.No. 37/B
Ponneri, Madras 601204
Tamil Nadu, India
Reading, music
U.S.A.

Lejo Eappen Jacob (12)
Palimuthathu Medayil
No. 1, Prayor
Pandnad N.P.O.
Via Killisherry 689124
Kerala, India
Reading, cricket
U.S.A., Switzerland

7546
P.V. Madhusudan (14)
s/o Mr. P.R. Vishwanathan
Shetty
Shri Ranganatha Metal
Stores
New Batar Road
K.R. Nagar 571602
Mysore Dist.
Karnataka, India

Stamps and coins Japan, U.K.

7547

Pratap Kumar H.T. (14)
s/o Mr. H.M. Thammanna
Gowda
Asstt. Conservator of
Forests
Wildlife Sub-division
Kargal Post, Sagar Taluk
Shimoga Dist.
Karnataka, India
Stamps & coins,
photography
Japan, U.S.A.

7548
M.L. Raghav (14)
s/o D.L. Lakshmana
Gowda
Madabar Post
N.R. Pura Taluk
Chickamagalur Dist.
Karnataka 577134
India
Collecting stickers
U.S.A., Japan

7549
Jayjeet Karmarkar (12)
D-118, IFFCO
Udaynagar
Gandhidham, Kutch
Gujarat 370203
India
Sports, pen-friends
Any country

7550 M. Chigklemba Meitei (14) Wangkhei Wingthem Pukhri Mapal Imphal, Manipur 795001 India Any country
7551
G. Harish (14)
s/o Mr. A. Gopal
c/o Deepa Stores, Aulahalli
Virgonagar Post
Bangalore
Karnataka 560049, India
Philately, dance
Any country

Swimming, drawing

Jerry Joseph (13)
Onayathamkuzhy House
Pampady P.O., 11th Mile
Kottayam Dist.
Kerala, India
Stamps, reading
Switzerland, U.S.A.

7552

7554

7553
K. Vamshi Krishna (9)
B-20 Goa University
P.O. Bambolim Complex
Taligao Plateau
Goa, India
Stamps, drawing
Any country

Rakesh (12) Kendriya Vidyalaya Churu, Rajasthan 331001 India Reading, maths & science Japan

7555
Vijay Mohan Ranwan (16)
s/o Mr. Mohanlal Ranwan
Sainik Basti, Churu
Sector C-89
Rajasthan 331001, India
Playing
Japan

Summer Activity in CBT

A report by Bhavana Nair

The unusually hot summer in Delhi in no way deterred a large majority of members of the Dr. B.C. Roy Memorial Library and Reading Room from commuting daily to the library from the cool confines of their homes. Why? The library had arranged six weeks of activities specially for its young members.

The programme of summer activities ran the whole gamut from movies to quizzes to theatre workshop to storytelling. Conducted by professionals, the products of many an activity can be seen displayed in the library. It is gay with paper festoons, masks and colourful little clay figures. Prizes were awarded in the competitive activities like 'Watchword', 'Crossword' and 'Slogan writing'. The theatre workshop culminated in a play put up by the participants. A large number of children took part in the library programmes, enjoying not only the learning of new skills but also the spirit of

camaraderie in which the activities were conducted.

The Shankar's Academy of Art and Book Publishing was established in 1991 in homage to Shankar, famous cartoonist and the founder of this magazine. The lack of good illustrators and publishing professionals was what drove the Children's Book Trust to found the Academy. Not only the field of publishing but also other visual media would benefit from the trained, knowledgeable students of the Academy.

The Academy conducts two intensive, practicaloriented diploma courses in Art, Book Illustration and Graphics and in Publishing. With its vast experience in publishing and printing, Children's Book Trust provides the Students of the Academy an ideal training ground. Some have been working on CBT books while others have been illustrating articles and stories in this very magazine.

The Academy held its

first Annual Exhibition of the works of the Art students from June 5 to June 15 in its premises at Nehru House. The idea was to give the world of advertising, printing and publishing a look at the work of the students. The exhibition was inaugurated by renowned cartoonist, Sudhir Dar.

The exhibition displayed the works of students of all four years of the course in Art. There were life drawings and still life, animal sketches and perspective drawing, collages, comics, book jackets, calendars, danglers, magazine designs and package designs on view. The emphasis all through the four years of the course in Art is on illustration.

Speaking informally to the students after the inauguration, a visibly impressed Mr. Dar lauded their works but stressed the need for developing the discipline for working fast under pressure and meeting deadlines.

Edited, Printed and Published by Vaijayanti Tonpe at the Indraprastha Press (CBT), New Delhi on behalf of the Children's Book Trust, from Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110 002.

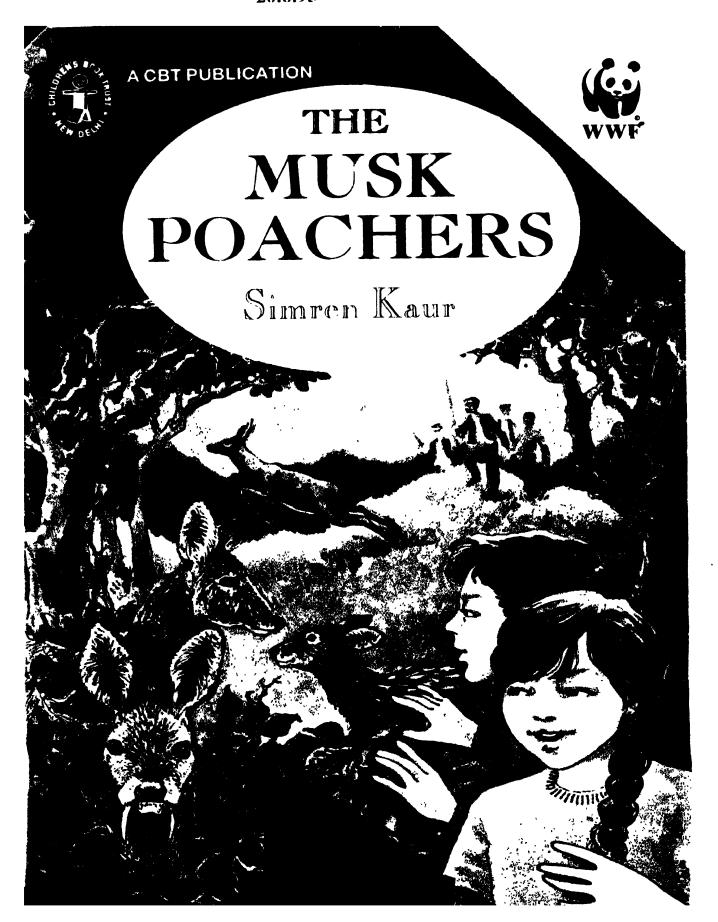
SUMMER ACTIVITY IN CBT

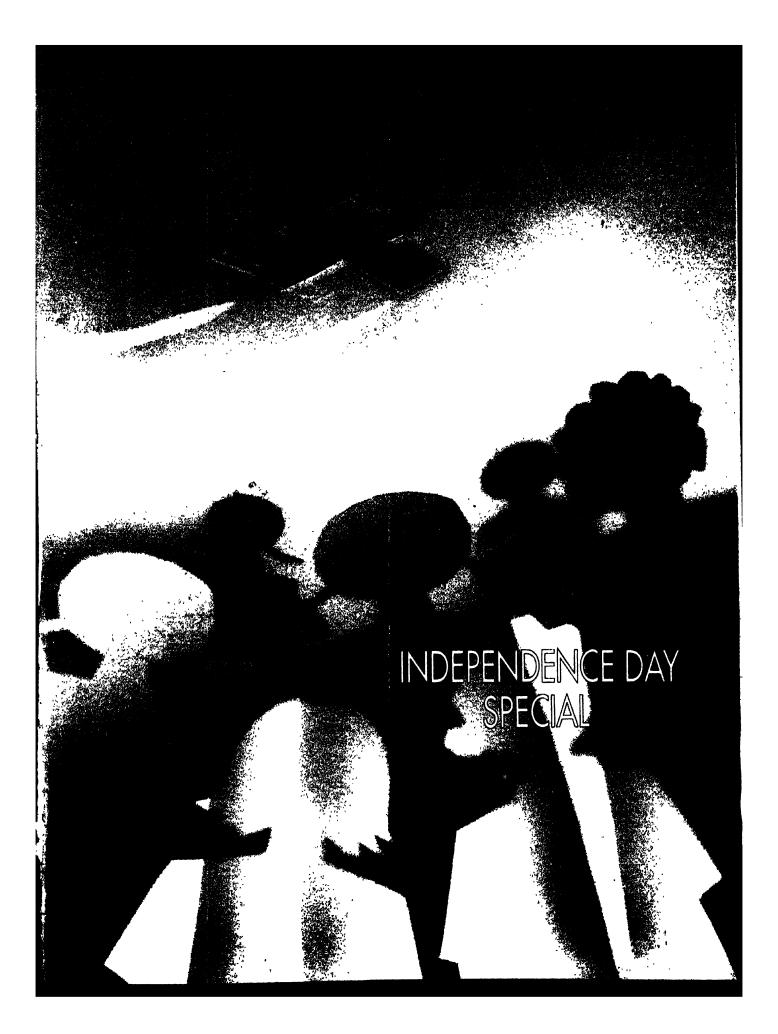


Learning new skills. Children making masks in Dr. B.C. Roy Memorial Library.

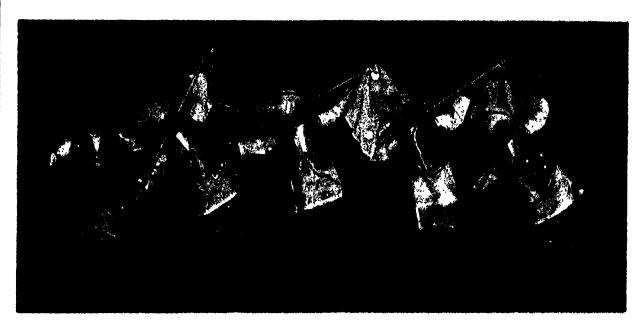


Mr. Sudhir Dar who inaugurated the Shankar's Academy of Art, exhibition, takes a closer look at an exhibit. With him is Mr. Ravi Shankar, GM (Ops) CBT.





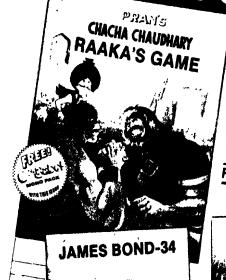




'Bhangra' dancers from Punjab

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Circulation & Advertisements C.P. Ravindran

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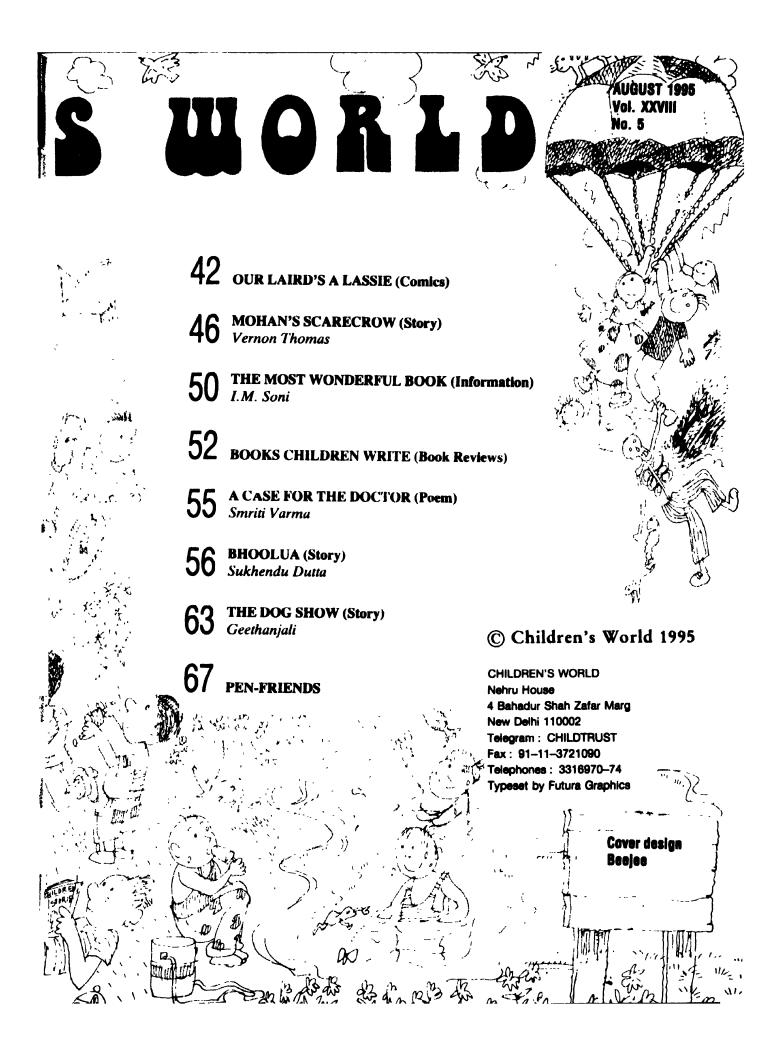
25 THE TRUCE (Story)
Anju Khosla

THINGS A WEEK OF SLIMMING CAN DO Merin Kuruvilla

THE UNTOLD SAGA OF XIV-586 (Science-Fiction)

Dilip M. Salwi





Dear Editor...

My son Abhinav, has become a great fan of Children's World. He "donates" his copies (after cover to cover devouring) to my sister's Montessori School.

I can't therefore help sharing this experience or reaction of Abhinav's, with you and readers of the magazine. I've written a long story about a little boy with a limp whom I saw in

Somewhere between Abhinav's naive simplicity and the passionate pride in India, felt by Anuj, Ruchika, Shazia and the others—lies the true Indian child's mind. One wonders how it got lost in the maze of imitative wilderness of Enid Blyton-read-alike-stories.

Almost all of us are quite clear in our minds that what matters to us is a good story—irrespective of whether the author is Indian or not. But if it is about India or Indian life—one would definitely expect it to ring true on its own merit and not be a pale attempt at 'copying' a 'phoren' idea of adventure, mystery or what have you. Is that why most children's fiction in circulation today comes off only 'second best'-because it does not ring true?

Why is it that when they are asked to write original stories, most children in our schools and colleges still recreate golden-haired princesses or set off fair haired Marys with blue eyes on ridiculous adventures with Dicks and Toms that do not even remotely resemble our own society's persons by those names? Or we have stories of Kamala and Raju and Sheila and Rani. But you really wonder how many

Uttarakhand last year. His job is to carry up endless buckets of hot water to the pilgrims on their way to Badrinath/Kedarnath. And he limps. Rest of the day he looks after the pony in the jungle.

My story had him meet a young botanist who comes to paint the Himalayan flowers for her book. The result of their friendship—Langdoo goes to school and dreams of becoming her assistant when

of the things these characters do in books, children by those names would be doing in 'true Indian' life.

Remember Sushmita and Aishwarya? They became queens too, because they had that something special, that raised them head and shoulders above other competitors. Their names did not come in the way! So where do those hidden qualities of head and heart go when we put pen to paper and fail to flesh out a true Indian character? We have had no difficulty in putting ıdlı-dosa-sambar, shrikhandpuri, or tandoori restaurants in even the remotest corners of the globe. Our Tagores, R.K. Narayans and Vikram Seths have left their impressions on the adult-literature world. Yet, apart from Arup Kumar Dutta's The Kaziranga Trail, in recent times how many children's books can one recall having "made it" as universally appealing reading?

If rhino-poaching in a sanctuary in Assam can capture the imaginations of readers in Dutch, Japanese, German and several other world languages, without names like Jonti, Phuken, Bubul undergoing a change, surely, we can conclude it is the *story* and its compelling

he grows up.

My son read it and said, "How sad!" I thought he was touched by the hardships of the boy's life. But no. "Amma, he was so happy. Why are you sending him to school?"

You and I shouldn't be surprised by anything children say or do. But all the same, I was!

> Gowri Ramnarayan Madras

...Dear Readers

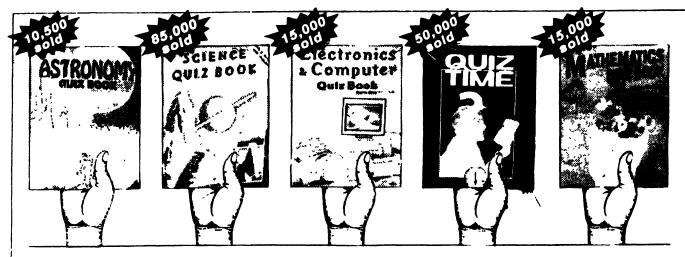
telling that is of paramount interest to the reader. So why are young, budding writers, and writers of books for them so preoccupied with unseemly clones of Enid Blyton, Carolyn Keene and Franklin W. Dixon?

Why is it that Anne Frank's diary moves us still, although World War II is long since over and Zlata's Diary churns our insides even though it is 'merely' a child's journal maintained in a not-at-peace-city in a 'foreign' country like Yugoslavia?

Is it not because words describe feelings—be they of patriotism, pride, belonging, love, hate, dependence, interaction?

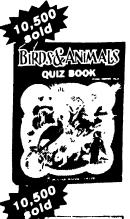
And since words usually crowd books and books crowded together make literature... Is it not that which makes it easiest for us to prove our national identities with?

Readers of this magazine, we are sure, are not 'bogged' down by any such doubts about their identities. This 48th Independence Day seems to be the right enough time for all of us—readers and writers—to start making our presence felt...

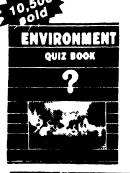


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To P. Lagat Programme Thustre of a Beejee

in ont he at build by which is still.

The July show turn the dull, dusty la scape green. In August u see more of green. Found by the rain, the crops wild plants just grow and grow.

Everything around looks beautiful. As in July, you hear the *koel* call. The peacock dances. Insects hum and drone. At night the frogs croak.

There are gay, even glorious, goings-on in the sky too. Now the clouds

co le e a ourful brail ften a spectacle of la gold art o ugust is the

art o ugust is the lian muth of Sawan, it the month of adon. ke the first, the liso celebrated

It ouly has its festivals, so has August. They are in tune with the monsoon mood of joy, mirth and hope.

Sometimes August has dry spells. Then it is hot and dusty as in summer. And sometimes it rains oo mud The here are loods a have Well, you have with the sour

To the Hindus, as to many others, the full moon is always auspicious. It is more so in the month of Sawan. More festivals than one, fall on the full moon day in Sawan.

For about two weeks before this day you see strands of silver, golden and silken threads, with tiny tufts at each end, on display at roadside stalls. These are rakhis.

The rakhi stands for love—the bond of love between a sister and

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brother. The rakhi festival is called Raksha Bandhan. It symbolises a brother's pledge of protection. Raksha Bandhan falls on August 10, this year.

As the day draws, near, more and more rakhis are on sale. And they are more colourful too. Many are like beady and floral wrist-bands or bracelets.

Some girls and women buy them early to post them to their brothers in other parts of the country or abroad.

On the festival day sisters tie the threads or bracelets round their brothers' wrists with a prayer for their long life. They also offer them sweets. In return the brothers give them money or gifts.

The tying of rakhi is an old custom. Some trace it back to myths. Once Indra lost his heaven or heavenly city of Amaravati to the demons. His wife, Sachi, prayed to Vishnu for help.

Vishnu gave Sachi a piece of thread. He asked her to tie it round her husband's wrist. After this Indra fought with the demons again and regained his heaven.

A girl may offer a *rakhi* to a boy who is not her brother. All she needs to have is sisterly love for

him. Or a boy with a brotherly feeling may approach a girl for a rakhi.

It is said that the widow of Rana Sanga sent a rakhi to Humayun. The Mughal king honoured it. He protected her fort against her foe.

There are many folk songs about rakhi. They are songs of Sawan or the rainy season, with the added feeling of sisterly love.

On the same day is celebrated *Narelli Purnima* or coconut day. By this time the force or fury of the monsoon slows down over the seas. The fishermen can again safely venture out.

They hail the day by offering coconuts to the sea god, Varuna. They repaint their boats, dance and carry a decorated coconut in procession.

On the same day, Hindus who wear the sacred thread change the old with a new one. This rite is called *Upkarna*.

Up in Kashmir pilgrims gather at the cave of Amarnath. The spot is sacred to Shiva. Inside is an ice lingam. The lingam is a symbol of the great god.

The yatra or pilgrimage begins ceremoniously several days before. The

progress is slow, for the climb is long and not so easy. But the devout make it in time.

Also on August 10, this year, (depending on the sighting of the moon) is Id-e-Milad, or the Muslim event that marks the Prophet's birthday, as well as the day of his death, and is therefore, observed with sobriety.

Janmashtami—birthday of Krishna. Ashtami in the festival's name refers to the eighth day of the second half of Sawan. Long, long ago, Kansa ruled over Mathura. Rather, he had seized the throne from his father. One day a voice from the sky told him that he would die at the hands of the eighth child of his sister, Devaki.

Kansa put both Devaki and her husband, Vasudeva, behind bars. He killed all the sons born to them there. And he waited for the eighth.

To his surprise, the eighth child was a girl. But he did not want to



take a chance. He decided to finish her too.

Before he could, in a flash of lightning, the girl vanished. A voice from above said that Kansa's killer was alive and well in Gokula.

Actually, the eighth child was Krishna. When he was born at midnight, the cell was filled with light. Its door opened on its own. Outside the guards sat dozing.

Vasudeva felt as if some strange power were guiding him. He put the newborn in a basket and walked out. He went to the Jamuna's bank. Then he waded into the river.

It was drizzling, but like an umbrella the hood of a giant snake protected the child.

Vasudeva reached the cowherds' village of Gokula. He went to the house of Nanda. His wife, Yashodha, had given birth to a girl. Vasudeva switched the babies and, guided by that strange power as before, came back to prison.

Krishna, the Hindus believe, is the eighth avatara or incarnation of Vishnu. He came to the world of men to rid it of the sinful rule of Kansa.

Janmashtami is celebrated by enacting the scenes of Krishna's birth



and childhood. The temples are decorated. People go there from morning till the hour of birth at midnight. There is a festive atmosphere outside. Janmashtami occurs on August 18, this year.

At many places Krishna leelas—plays or dances—are staged. The Gita is recited. Devotional songs are presented. And numerous tableaus depict the frolics of Gopala or Krishna as the divine cowherd.

In Maharashtra earthen pots of curd and butter are hung as high as possible. Boys form pyramids to get at them amidst joyous shouting and chants of "Govinda ala re."

Independence Day may not be like a monsoon festival. But without it the story of August celebrations will be incomplete.

August 15 is a national holiday. On this day, in 1947, India became free from British rule. In memory of that day we hold functions all over the country.

We remember the men who fought for freedom and renew, in front of the national flag, our pledge to preserve the hard-won freedom.



The occasion, like the Republic Day, is unique. People of all communities come together at the same place. They share the same joy, hope and fervour.

To children, and also many grown-ups, in and around Delhi, August offers a bonus. It is the fun and pleasure of kiteflying.

Delhi's summer is very hot. The July rains cool it. On clear evenings many boys fly kites on their roofs. As the days pass, more and more kites can be seen in the air.

With August the tempo quickens. Kite stalls spring up everywhere. They sell a variety of kites and spools and balls of twine, coated with paste and powdered glass.

On August 15 kite flying begins early in the morning. The strong sun may force a few hours' break in the afternoon. Then it starts again.

Before long the sky is swarming with kites of all sizes and colours. There are bouts and shouts of "Vo kata (there, it's cut)!" as some of the kites come tumbling down the currents of air.

It is like the Makara Sankranti day in Gujarat and Maharashtra.



Dear sayings and speeches,

Every now and then, our entire school goes into a tantrum, organising a school function for parents and other goops. The poor things have to come and sit under a drooping pandal and watch our various antics on a rickety, makeshift stage where the lights go boom boom and the mikes blink on and off. It's sheer torture for two and a half hours but somehow, these poor dodos seem to like it and they come back every year, filling up those creaky chairs and clapping with great enthusiasm.

I suppose the usual, renowned parental wisdom takes a holiday at these functions.

This year, the tantrum got increased a hundred times because Mr. Krish who, I think, was feeling sick at the time, asked Raghu to give the vote of thanks. Raghu! The vote of thanks! Raghu! Making a speech! Raghu, of all the people on the planet, actually going up on that platform and saying, 'Thank you...' Raghu! Words fail me.

Unfortunately words didn't fail Raghu. In fact, they, the words, I mean,

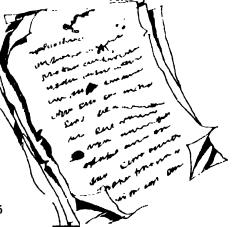
CHILDREN'S WORLDAUGUST 1995

got cosier and cosier with him till he was throwing them, the words I mean, all over the place, up and down the road and in and out of my room. It became so bad that I found I was sitting on words and walking on them and eating them. Raghu's words.

The first time was when he came in with twenty sheets of paper stapled to one another and covered with hairy marks which I recognised as Raghu's handwriting. Raghu himself came at the end of the twenty sheets, looking stuffy and important. "This," he announced, waving a stuffy hand at the sheets of paper, "this is my speech."

"Speech?" I asked, aghast. "You say this is your speech? It looks like a dragon's bedcover."

He ignored me as I knew he would. Instead, he cleared his throat and began importantly, "Dear Principal Sir, dear Librarian, dear Class teachers of



Std. I, Std. II, Std. III... (he went all the way to Std. XII), dear English teachers of Std. I, Std. II... (he went all the way to Std. XII), dear Hindi teachers of Std. I (he went all the way to Std. XII)... (then he went down the whole list of subject teachers), dear P.T. teacher of Std. I (he went all the way to Std. XII) and ..." By this time, my ears had started hurting but Raghu had finished only one sheet of the twenty. Then he cleared his throat again and said importantly, "It is a great privilege and honour fo. me to be standing up here today in front of this august assembly..." He went on in this way, using september, october, november and december along the way and making' out that, the fact of Raghu giving a Thank You speech was as important and as solemn as the Queen smiling from her balcony.

By this time, the tips of my fingers were curling up but only two of the twenty sheets were done. Then Raghu cleared his throat a third time and... I ran out of the room.

When I saw Raghu again, he was looking rather crushed. Looking crushed is not usual with Raghu so I realised that Mr. Krish had been talking to him. I was right.
Mr. Krish had told Raghu to make his speech short and much more to the point. So about nineteen of those twenty sheets had to go.

"It's not fair," said





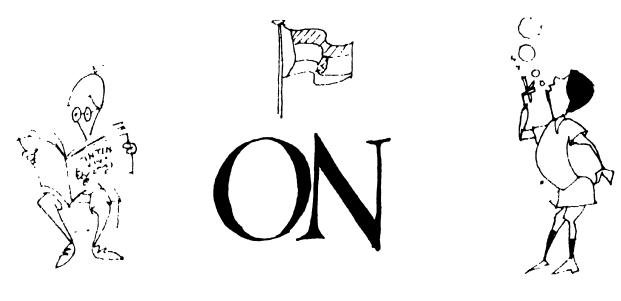
Raghu fiercely. "After all, everybody has to be thanked. You can't leave anyone out. Do you know how bad people feel if they are left out?" And then from under my bed, he drew out a gigantic roll of paper with all those hairy marks and began clearing his throat again.

I ran out for dear life.

The next time I saw Raghu was on the day of the function. He was looking sulky and clean, his tie had been tied rightly around his neck and his shirt was firm and stiff and tucked into his trouser waistband. He looked as strange as a ship out of water and I almost didn't recognise him. I was about to say 'Hello' when Mr. Krish came by, looking tired and angry as he always does on these tantrum days. "Remember," he told Raghu, "remember to keep your speech short, precise and to the point. Remember, it has to be to the point."

Maybe that's why when Raghu went up to the mike to give the vote of thanks, all he said was, "Dear everybody. Thank you."

Yours clear, precise and sharpened to a point, Perky



INDIANNESS

-or the absence of it



Text: Sudha Sanjeev

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

OME Independence day and it is occasion to stir up one's patriotic fervour. To the old, the feeling is genuine; to those born just before and soon after India became free, there remains a measure of respect for the nation and thankfulness at the way events turned out. But to

many young people who are separated by decades, from the cataclysmic happenings of the first half of this century, the reaction to Independence, patriotism and its accompanying feeling of loyalty, is probably, 'Huh? If you say so'. Patriotic fervour does not surface in them with just a mere stirring;

it requires, more or less, a vigorous churning!

On being asked their views on 'Indianness' and 'being Indians', most of the children had, subconsciously, made a distinction between theory and reality, between the past and the present. One of them aptly put it as 'pride' in the history, culture,

Anuj Dutt (18)

It is more a feeling, a faith and an image which makes me an Indian rather than the reality which doesn't conform to any morality or righteousness.

I feel proud to be a part of one of the most ancient civilisations on earth; I feel a custodian and caretaker of our land that has thrown new light in the field on Science and Ahimsa.

Indianness is a collage of various languages, cuisines, culture and tradition smothered by poverty, illiteracy, casteism, and corruption—a bleak and dismal future.



Ruchika Rishi (17+)

Being an Indian is something to be proud of—the sheer wealth of our culture, tradition, heritage, natural beauty, forests, wildlife.

Yet there are so many drawbacks—political systems, lack of basic discipline and values, desecration of our monuments and natural wealth.

The word Indianness

unfortunately evokes negative images first crowds, filth, poverty. Yet the better images surface later. Feeling of pride and dismay.

History reveals that even in oppression we retained a separate, distinct identity—a refusal to buckle down—this streak is admirable.



Akanksha Dutt (11+)

The first thing that comes to my mind is that India is our motherland. I feel proud of all the flora and fauna of India. I am happy to be a citizen of India.

traditions, forests, beauty of India—all legacies from the past—and 'dismay' at the prevailing poverty, filth, over-population, lack of honesty, discipline and values—all demons of the present. How they resolve the two and convert 'dismay' into 'pride' may occupy some of them while they journey through life. Yet, despite all the shortcomings in India, many of

them, at present, would not choose to change their nationalities. 'One will always be an Indian whether one is living away from the country or not.'

In a seminar held in February by Bharat Sankalp on 'Indianness in Indian literature, children's literature'—the narrative tradition as well as the new literaturewas discussed. Subsequent to this, Children's World had invited responses on 'What is Indianness'. 'Do the books you read give you a 'feel' of Indianness?' Some of the views are being carried in this issue.

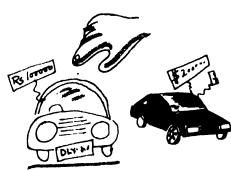
Elusive though the definition of Indianness may be, one can instinctively identify it. However westernised our clothes and habits are, there is no confusion in our minds about Indianness. Yet, if there is one field in which a lot of confusion prevails—in fact, has been created—it is Indian writing in English, particularly for children.

As a reviewer of books for children, I have had the occasion to read several recent publications. These are a world apart from the works of seasoned authors. As just one example, take R.K. Narayan's Swami and Friends. Steeped in the rustic flavour of a typical town in South India are characters who come alive with each deft description. The book is totally absorbing. Inherent, though unspoken, is the author's sincerity and intrinsic pride in all that is Indian... all that is his 'home'.

It is this sincerity and pride that the new breed of writers and their writing lack. They write in the hope that appreciation and recognition will come from Europe or the west. Having grown up on adventure stories, boarding school stories and fairy tales, they believe that these are time-tested formulae that will ensure success. So instead of George, Jack, Sally and

Ahmer Khan (8+)

I am born in India. I know some of the history of India. I am used to India and there is a difference in America and India. There are rupees in India and dollars in America. If somebody gives me an American car and another man is giving me an Indian car, I will take the Indian car.



Shazia Khan (13+)

I feel proud to be an Indian. India is a vast country with vast differences, but a love for our country binds us all

together. India has a glorious golden history, but nowadays Indians are getting more and more westernised. I feel that India would be a much better country if problems like communalism, poverty, overpopulation and illiteracy are removed.

Rahul Asthana (18+)

Being an Indian—the first thing which strikes you is the crushing responsibility of belonging to an ancient civilisation having a 5000-year history. I feel proud to come from the country of Buddha and Gandhi—a country which threw off the imperialist yoke only with non-violence.

The very concept of Indianness is so abstract. Indian culture is not monolithic—it is an amal-

gamation of four or five different cultures.

The word connotes peace, harmony and tolerance.

Meenakshí Akhouri (17+)

To me there is a distinct division between India which is modern and which I don't like too much, and Bharat—Apna desh—which I like very much.

One feels a strong sense of belonging, of one's roots—even if one goes away it will still be one's own.

The pitfalls are the political system and the selfishness of Indians.

Great natural beauty but it's getting spoilt.

CHILDREN'S WORLDAUGUST 1995

Nancy, they substitute Indian names in contrived, foreign situations in our books. Girls and boys

traipse off to different cities to catch drug traffickers and smugglers.

Neha Prakash (17+)

Very diverse. But there is a lack of everything—i.e. there is no lack of intelligence but there is a lack of ability to use that intelligence. Indians can solve small problems but not big ones. Yet India is the best, most beautiful.

Indianness signifies purity to me.



Roomki Mitra (18+)

India is known to be a land of miracles, nonviolence. It is better to be known as a land of patriotism, hard work.

India is a beautiful land with wonderful seasons. Its history is eventful. Yet people are selfish—there is no patriotism. The present generation was not directly involved in the freedom struggle, hence we don't realise its value. The struggle should have been bloodier!

About being an Indian, I find nothing to be proud of at present. My attitude is one of 'no love no hate'. Crises bring out the best in us.

What it means to be an Indian? Do you read Indian authors?

Aditya Prasad (14)

It means to live in a country having a great cultural heritage.

It means to have friends of all religions and know them better.

It means to be myself.

Mayank Rawal

I like R.K. Narayan's short stories. I like his style of writing and flow of language. But if I were to choose a book for myself it would be a foreign book—probably fairy tales.



Prakash Deep (11½)

I don't always read Indian books. I like Premchand's stories. I like Indian stories because they normally have a happy ending.

Divi Ramola (9)

I like reading fun books. Pepper and the Capuchin Monkey is one of my favourites. I like the way it is written. I would buy books by the authors I like—foreign or Indian.



Farhan Ali Naqvi

The Blind Witness by Arup Kumar Dutta is my favourite book. It is very much attached to real life happenings and it has a lot of suspense. I would buy a foreign book.

Noren (13)

R.K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond are very good. I like Swami and Friends best because everything is so natural in it and it is about daily activities. Still, I would prefer to buy a foreign book.

CHILDREN'S WORLDAUGUST 1995

Children join boarding schools situated in castles with turrets, and discover secret passages and tunnels which brighten up their existence. All this is expressed in language liberally sprinkled with slang—obviously in an attempt to win the approval of the swinging jet set. These books are forgotten even before they are put down. What the authors leave unstated is

Aparajita Sharma (12)

I like Swami and Friends by R.K. Narayan. I like Swami's father loving and scolding Swami both at the same place. I would buy a foreign book because they are more beautifully descriptive.



Sharmishta Deb (15)

I like Ruskin Bond's
Adventures of Rusty
because of the varied
range of emotions and the
practical ending of the
story.

Abhijit Dutt (12)

I prefer foreign books because the foreign writers make it more like real life.

Anjor Sharma (11)

I will buy a foreign book because I like them more than Indian books.

Saumya Singh (15)

Yes, I read books by Indian authors. I like Ruskin Bond and R.K. Narayan. Room on the Roof, The Hidden Pool and their short stories are some of my favourites. I like these books because they are involving. They make me feel as if I am also one of the characters in the book. I can imagine the various characters in my mind as all of them are Indians and the surroundings in the story are all set in India.



CHILDREN'S WORLDAUGUST 1995

I would not buy a book just on the criteria about the author being Indian or foreign. It would depend on whether it has a good content and whether it would be really fruitful to me.



Aniruddha Shankar (18)

I have read lots of them. Anita Desai, Anurag Mathur, Kavery Bhatt, Vikram Seth (delightful!). Anurag Mathur is one of my favourites. I enjoy the Indian perspective. I wouldn't buy a book just because it is by an Indian. But, yes, our writers are as good as many others.

that this, according to them, is the typical milieu of an Indian child. How removed from reality this is, we well know.

So, what are we achieving? What are we promoting? Publishing houses seem to emerge as the main offenders. For, if they were not so eager, so willing to publish whatever is handed to them, less 'confusion' would reach the children. Surely,

there needs to be a policy regarding the type of manuscripts accepted. Only if they set high standards for themselves, will they get work that is worth publishing; work that is honest and sincere in expression, experience, emotion and thought. Indianness, as we desire it, will be a natural and inevitable corollary.

Perhaps the children of today will be more suc-

cessful in shrugging off these confusions on Indianness in the field of creative writing. We look forward to it.

It is almost half a century since we have achieved independence—time enough for an identity that is typically ours to emerge. Seek it, identify it, cherish it and assert it so that the future generations have something to be proud of.



I have read Dilip Salwi, Arup Kumar Dutta, Nilima Sinha, Jim Corbett.

My favourite Indian book is *The Kaziranga* Trail because of the information it has, the baffling mystery and the spirit of adventure in them. But I would prefer to buy a

foreign book because it is more hi-tech and action packed.

Pallavi Chopra (18)

I read Indian books only. Somehow I relate to them the most. I love Ruskin Bond. Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra is my favourite. Somehow one can almost smell and feel what he is writing about. Tagore's poetry is so sensitive. I don't react in the same way to, say, Russian authors because the characters and setting is so alien to me.





BIG BROTHERS

Amisha Kanoria % Illustrations: Seema Pandey

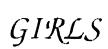
f"Ouch! Just stop it! It hurts!
Stop pinching me,
I'm not a cry-baby,
But you're a spoilt brat,
Stop behaving like a cat."

"Mummy! he's scratching me," I cried in dismay.

"He's also dragged me all the way."

But two minutes later,
We're the best of friends,
The atmosphere is calm,
The battle ends.
Oh God! save us from
Our big brothers,
Because life is boring
Without each other.

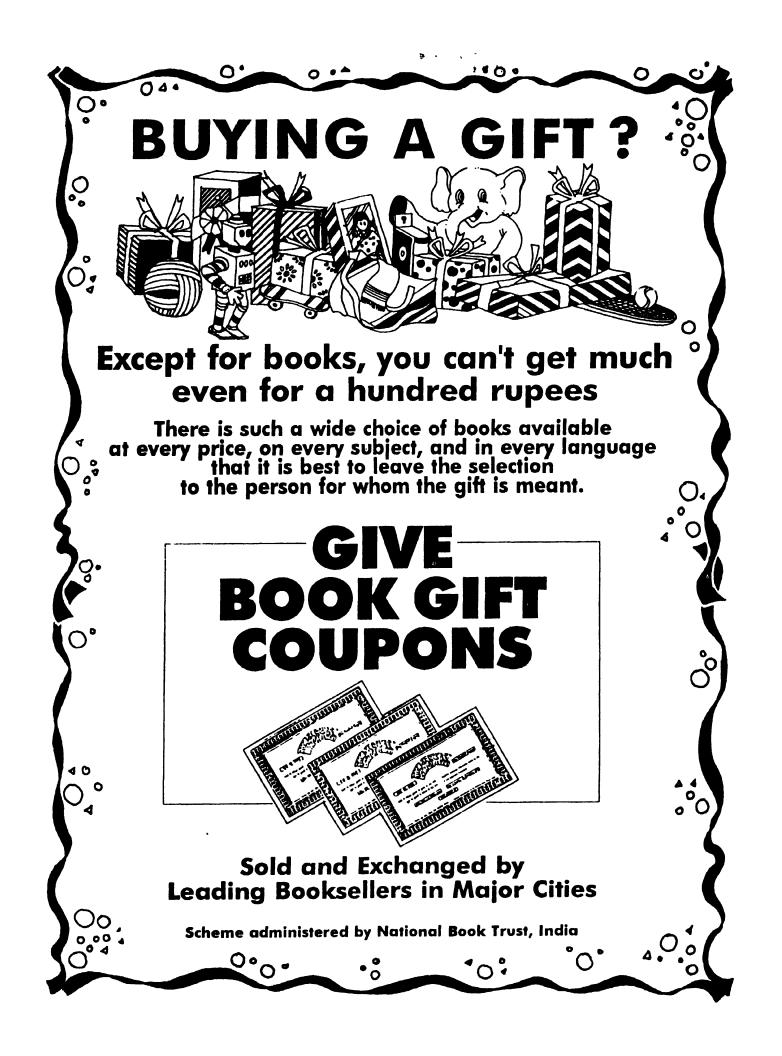


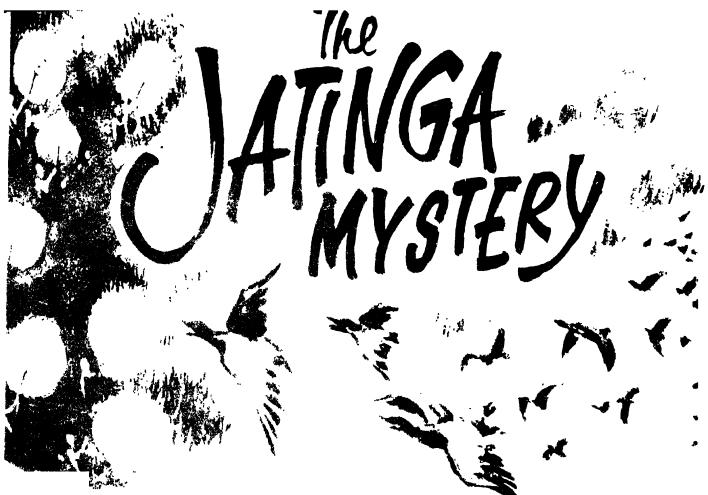


Rachit Khosla (10)

Girls are clever,
Few give them credit ever.
Known as sisters, aunts and mothers,
They tie rakhis to their wonderful
brothers.
They are the true pillars supporting
men,
For this, appreciation should always be
given to them.
They are the creators of life,
We should respect girls all the time.







Text: Velayudhan

Illustrations: Rebott Bhushan Ghosh

VERY year between August and October, a little, sleepy village, in the mountains of Assam, plays host to a baffling mystery of bird behaviour.

On moonless, misty nights when the wind blows south-westerly, large birds come flocking to any source of light in Jatinga, just as moths and insects fly towards a candle in other parts of the world. The phenomenon is noticed only in Jatinga and not in any of the numerous villages around.

The birds flocking to

light sources are not local birds. They are rarely seen during the day. About 45 species of birds have been so far recorded to have this deathly fascination for light. Most of these are groundnesting water birds.

Why do these birds fly towards light in Jatinga and nowhere else? No one knows for sure, but the peculiar location of Jatinga, the inclement weather and the groundnesting habits of birds may have something to do with it.

Jatinga is located on a

plateau on the Borail mountain range in the north Kachar district of Assam. The whole area is densely forested and crisscrossed by rivulets, while the terrain is extremely uneven. Between August and October the area receives heavy, incessant rain with the humidity going up to 85-90 per cent. Swift winds constantly lash the area and Jatinga gets engulfed almost perpetually in a thick mist. The nearby lowlying areas get filled with water.

The non-stop rain and the innundation of nesting

sites perhaps forces the birds to fly out and look for sheltered spots. They fly over rivulets because it is easier to fly there than through dense forests. The wind, the mist and the absence of the moon completely disorient these birds and they fly towards any source of light they see. Being situated at a height Jatinga comes directly in their way.

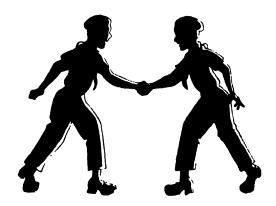
While scientists are still investigating this curious phenomenon for plausible explanations, the local people find it an easy source of acquiring meat.

All they have to do is to light up a lantern and pick up the dazed birds that crash into it.

The sad part is that many rare and endangered birds too show this fatal fascination for light and fall easy prey to indiscriminate villagers.







Story: Anju Khosla

R. RAO's whistle blew loud and clear for everyone to hear. The NCC cadets were scattered all over the playground in small groups. They began to return to the bus. I raced ahead because I wanted a comfortable window seat. With one hand clutching the bar on the door, I looked back, trying to locate my best friend, Praveen. I felt somebody untangle my fingers from the bar and lift me bodily backwards, dragging me a little because I resisted. Bouncing back as the grip slackened, I came face to face with Tarun and his gang.

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

"Crusader!" smiled Tarun wickedly, "VIPs first."

His entire gang of thirty cadets entered the bus one after the other, while I just stood there simmering with anger, frustration and humiliation. By the time I boarded the bus all the seats had been occupied. I moved forward a little and stood holding a leather handle overhead. Tarun's group had occupied the rear seats. They were all busy laughing and talking while I watched them with hatred and fury. I wanted to strike each of them such a blow as to knock them to the ground. But alas this was only a dream.

I have always been a shy, timid, soft-spoken person. I knew I was no match for Tarun's gang. He was neither good looking, nor tall, nor good in studies, but Tarun was witty and fun loving. Students of all classes desired his company. I am good-looking, tall, an excellent student but very reserved. My only friend is Praveen. Tarun caught my eye and asked, "Have I offended you in anyway?"

With a twinkle in his eyes, Raman commented, "Poor fellow could not even get a seat to sit."

"First come but not first served," remarked another.

I flushed as all eyes

rested on me. "You ought to know better than to be rude to your classmate," I said lamely.

"Come and sit here," Nitin patted the arm rest next to his seat. I was illat-ease with so much attention focussed on me and lowered myself into the seat. As I did so, Nitin quickly lifted the broken arm rest and I came down heavily on the rod with a thump, hurting myself. They all roared with laughter as I grimaced with pain. I got up hastily and just then Mr. Rao entered the bus blowing his whistle. Every student kept to his place in his presence. I moved to the front portion of the bus and sat in the driver's cabin.

We were students of class XI and were going on an NCC camp. I had been reluctant to go, but Mr. Rao had insisted, "You are a good student but you should be a good scout too," he said.

Tarun and his gang were always upto some mischief or the other.

Earlier I too had enjoyed their pranks, but one particular incident antagonised both of us.

Unintentionally one day I informed the science teacher that Tarun was in school but not in class.

Tarun was in the science teacher's bad books. He often pointed out to Tarun that 'A boy who talks too much does not learn enough.' He reported the absentees to the Principal and Tarun's parents were called to school.

Since then, Tarun had always tried to malign me and being shy I could not make a befitting retort and burnt with humiliation. Tarun had named me 'Crusader', ever since.

Soon we were at the Guest House, near the dam. I was among the last ones to get off. As I did so, I noticed Mr. Rao's purse lying on the seat. I picked it up and yelled, "Sir, your purse", waving it above my head. I ran to give it to Mr. Rao.

When I passed Tarun he murmured loud enough



for me to hear, "The Crusader swears that he will always be truthful."

I resolved not to say anything for the next two days.

It was already late afternoon. We dumped our luggage in the Guest House and went off to do social service in the village. In the evening, the camp fire was lit in front of the Guest House.

I dressed with care, for I had to make the opening speech. With jeans and T-shirt I wore a cap. My speech was in my hand. It was a lovely evening. After my speech, cultural items were presented. We danced, clapped and sang.

Time flew. It was past midnight when Mr. Rao gave a little speech and invited all of us for dinner.

We lined up with our plates. As luck would have it, Tarun was right in front of me. He was busy talking to his friend ahead of him. I relaxed and watched the others. Suddenly Tarun turned and our eyes met.

He smiled and said aloud, "Here, boys, can you solve a puzzle?"

"Yes!" replied some.

"Then listen carefully," he went on. "Suede shoes on feet, cap on head, papers in hand and angry looks, who is he?"

His gang laughed,

"It's...it's Crusader, our dear Crusader," replied someone.

They all clapped.

I fumed at this fresh insult.

I served myself some food and turned to go. Somebody stuck out his foot and I tripped. Hot potato curry fell on my hand, burning it. Anger blinded me. I was utterly confused and hardly knew what I was doing. I made haste and caught the culprit. It was Tarun. He turned round seeing my boldness and was taken by surprise. I quickly picked a hig hot potato and plastered it on his leg, then another on his foot,



till my own hands burnt. The hot, crushed potato stuck to his skin, scalding him. He wriggled in pain, screaming and dancing the *kathak* in a futile attempt to remove the mess.

The commotion caught Mr. Rao's attention. Without bothering to find out the reason he thundered, "If you two cannot maintain the decorum of this place, I shall punish you."

I panicked. I escaped to the left side of the Guest House and stole along the dark alley with a thumping heart. Someone kept calling, "Rahul, come back, Rahul, come back."

I needed solitude to quieten my nerves as this was the first time I had retaliated. 'May be later I will extend a hand of friendship and bury the hatchet,' I thought to myself.

Suddenly it began to rain and the wind blew wildly. I got up and with determined steps sought Tarun out for a possible reconciliation. I could see from the Guest House steps that he had taken shelter under the shed on the opposite side. As I drew nearer, he saw me, and stood staring at me with an expressionless face, as he swung his

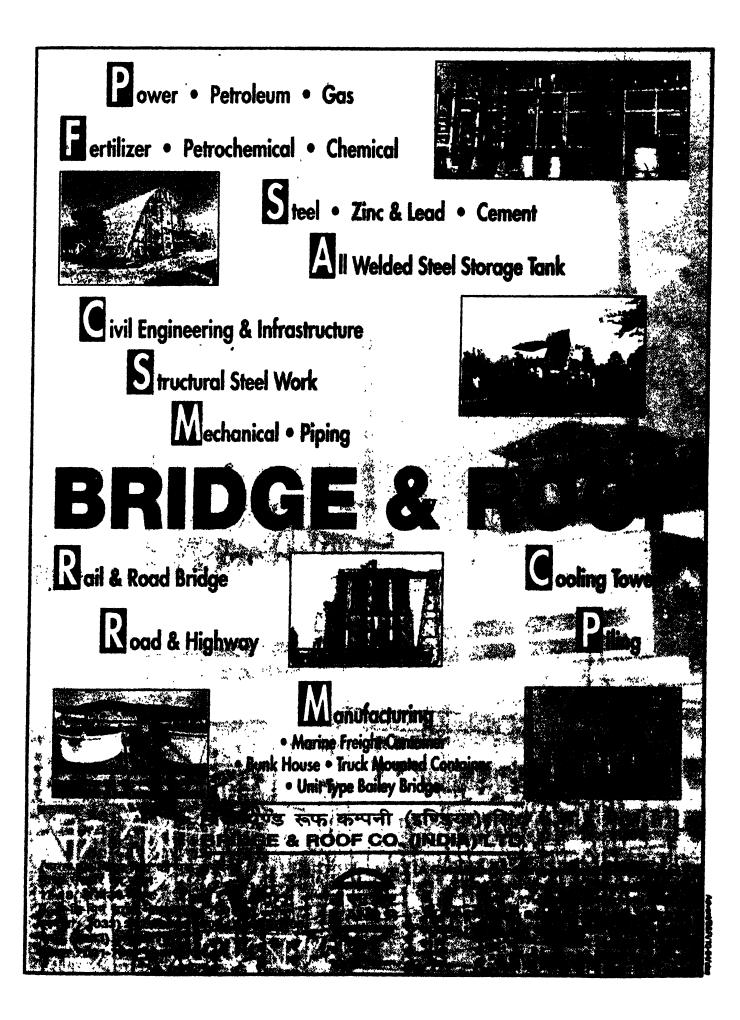
walking stick. The boys watched with a grin on their faces. When a timid boy challenges a bully, he has some admirers in the crowd.

The most unexpected event happened. The bamboo shed which was shaking with the wind, fell. I ran forward, caught Tarun by his arm and swiftly pulled him away. He would have been badly injured like some others,

by the falling of the asbestos roof. There was no warning about the impending crash. Tarun was visibly shaken. He looked at me in bewilderment and took time to gain control of his emotions. He held my hand all the while. Later he pressed my palm and grinned amiably.

The battle was over. Together, we went forward to help the injured.

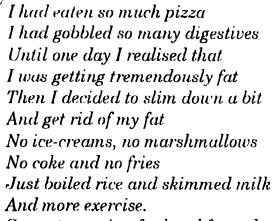






he Things a Week of Slimming Can Do

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (10) Illustrations: Seema Pandey



So next morning for breakfast a brown egg (that's it)

Then an early morning jog to help me stay fit

I had some plain milk the moment I came back

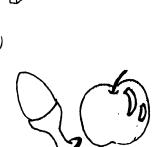
I would have tried tennis but I don't have the knack

After exercising for an hour with only one break

I started skipping 'n' skipping till I felt the floor shake

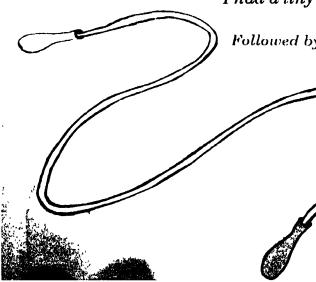
I had a tiny red apple and a plum for a snack

Followed by push-ups nearly breaking my back











Lunch was boiled rice and lettuce (how crude!).

And to think I said grace for this
uninteresting food
Next was biking and I thought it would be
nice

But it ended up with me in a shop for an ice I collapsed on the bed as soon as I reached

home

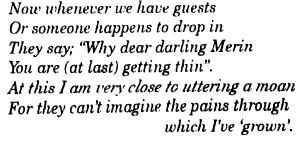
I felt as if I had just biked all the way to

Rome
I had a wash (I was filthy) and sat down
to eat

What! two slices of brown bread without any meat?

This routine continued for one whole week
I was half starved, pale and kind of sleek
My tummy was in and I wasn't such a
hulk

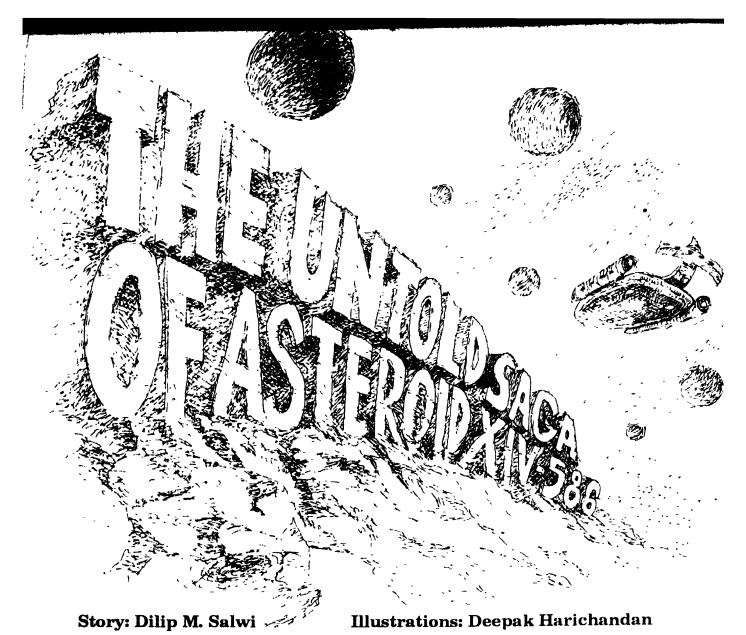
My thighs had reduced but they still had bulk











OU'RE not ready to believe this—are you?" asked Commander Patil sharply of the face on the screen.

"How can I? Nobody does, here!" snapped back Dr. Amis Roget with a deadpan face.

Dr. Amis Roget was the Chief of the Asteroid Exploration Project (AEP) stationed at planet Mars.

"All our known sources and records of navigation

through asteroids indicate that this tragedy should not have occurred. After all, these asteroids are simply huge stones lying between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. The disaster occurred within minutes of Capt.

MacGreal's landing on asteroid XIV-586. How could it have happened so soon? I'm not ready to believe this! How can others believe it?"

Dr. Roget's expression-

less face was now full of emotion. The very first mission of his project—the project he had been treating as his own—had failed. His career was at stake. How could he send another mission unless he knew precisely why the first one had failed?

"...How could it have happened? I planned every minute move myself..." continued Dr. Roget and looked away from the camera to hide his inner feelings.

"But it has happened, Dr. Roget! You've got to believe all this!" persisted Commander Patil. He was aboard the space platform Orbit-5, somewhere between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. His eyes turned to the panoramic view of space that the porthole at his elbow offered.

Stars were scattered like diamonds, interspersed with some slowly moving dark, hazy patches. These were prominent asteroids on the periphery of the asteroid belt. A huge orange, banded blur among them was the planet Jupiter. The asteroids and the planet itself, appeared to be silent spectators of the tragedy that had occurred at XIV-586.

"I am telling you, Dr. Roget," continued Commander Patil addressing the face on the screen. "It must have been something that blew up the spacecraft. Capt. MacGreal is one of the best pilots we have this side of the solar system. Since we were not in contact with him on radio-surrounded as he was with asteroids—he must have only had enough time to survey the surface of the asteroid.

His spacecraft must have been hit the next moment! How? We don't know. We can only make a guess. I can imagine your feelings, Capt. Roget. It isn't a blow to your mission alone. It is a blow to mankind's long cherished desire to explore asteroids for metals and minerals. I know it's very difficult to accept, but it is the truth..."

"I have to accept it now, anyway!" said Dr. Roget and sighed. "But, can you do one thing more? Can you send a reconnaissance mission and report back to me with the findings? The exact findings?"

"Yes, yes, why not? I'll personally look into this mission. We'll send our best navigator. You'll get the report within hours. Please don't get upset. We all know your feelings. We'll do our best in this matter. Okay?"

"Okay! But be sure the report of your mission is not leaked out to our colonies on Moon and Mars. Take every precaution to ensure that," said Dr. Roget, looking carefully at the commander's face on the screen. "Send me your report not on radio but on coded laser. Is that clear?... I also want the Orange Box from the debris of the spacecraft, if you can find it.

You may or may not be aware that our spectroscopic studies using laser have revealed that the asteroid is a highly valuable one..."

"In what way? May I know, Dr. Roget?... I mean... It may help us in our investigations..."

Commander Patil had sensed even before Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft had lifted off the space platform that XIV-586 had something special. But, what that something special was, was a mystery which the project scientists had kept from him.

"No harm in telling you now that the mission has failed," said Dr. Roget and sighed. "XIV-586 contained gold—real gold, Commander Patil..."

"Oh? Is that so? My!
My!.... Did Capt.
MacGreal know this when
he left on the mission?"
asked Commander Patil,
his curiosity aroused.

"Well! Not exactly! But he knew he had been sent to XIV-586 to excavate something extremely valuable. That's all!..."

"Okay, Dr. Roget, that'll do for the present!" said Commander Patil. "I'll get back to you as soon as I have something concrete to report. Meanwhile, don't get upset. Over!"

When the screen went blank, Commander Patil turned his attention to the hazy patch of asteroids moving across the porthole at his elbow. 'So, there is gold hidden amongst them,' he thought to himself. For the lure of gold an ace pilot had been sacrificed. What next? Another to go and hunt for the gold! Why did Man hanker after gold? These primitive instincts still overpowered him in the late 21st century! Man would obviously remain the same, whatever the millenium. Commander Patil pressed a button on

the panels under his nose. The screen of the videophone lit up again. The scene was of a bunker in the crew quarters of his space platform, Orbit-5.

"Wait! Commander, wait! I'll just..." said Capt. Nawaz Khan as he unstrapped himself from the bunker. The weightlessness of space did affect his movements but he soon recovered and looked up at the Commander's face through the videophone screen.

"Yes, Commander, what's the matter? Is it something urgent?"

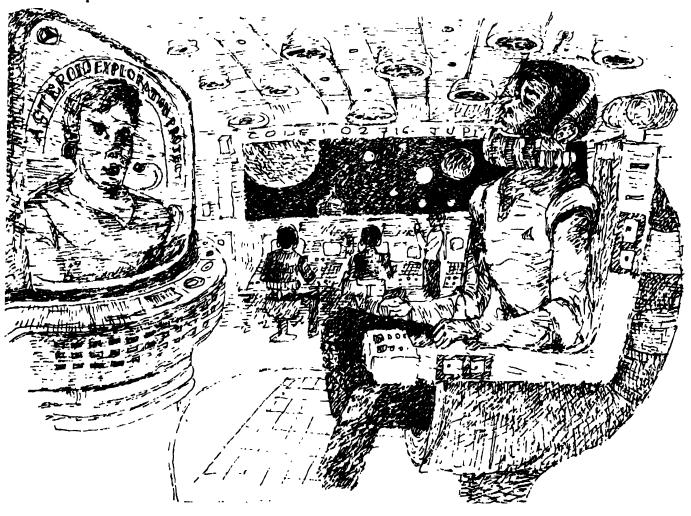
"Yes, Capt. Khan, our mission to asteroid

XIV-586 has failed!"
"Do you mean to say
Capt. MacGreal...?"

"Wait! Wait! Don't jump to conclusions, Capt.
Khan!" cut in Commander Patil. "We don't know as yet what has happened.
You have to go and find that out. It seems Capt.
MacGreal's spacecraft has been destroyed while negotiating the asteroid.
You will have to collect the Orange Box and Capt.
MacGreal's body from the debris. Please get ready to report immediately!"

"Yes, Commander, I'll join you soon!"

In a short while, Capt. Khan entered the control



cabin of Orbit-5 where Commander Patil was brooding over some maps. He gave one map marked with a thick red line to Capt. Khan and said, "Go through this map carefully. It outlines the path Capt. MacGreal followed through the asteroids till he reached XIV-586. It is the safest possible path in this region of the asteroid belt. You may have to follow the same path. But, remember, the distribution of asteroids in the neighbourhood of XIV-586 could have changed. Be ready for surprises!"

Capt. Khan looked at the map. The thick red line showed the trajectory that Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft was supposed to take through a cluster of asteroids. The distribution density of asteroids in that region of the belt was certainly high,' he thought. 'Could a small asteroid, the size of a pebble, have punctured Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft? In that case, there could be many more small asteroids in the region. Or, was it something else? It was difficult to say. Moreover, once he entered the belt he would not be able to consult Commander Patil because of radio silence.

"Your past flying experi-

ence will come in handy," said Commander Patil as though he had read Capt. Khan's mind. "Okay! Report as soon as you can. All the best, Capt. Khan!" Commander Patil shook his hand. The briefing was over. "But, remember, Capt. Khan," added Commander Patil, "this mission is top secret. You have to report to me directly only on coded laser, Okay, bye!"

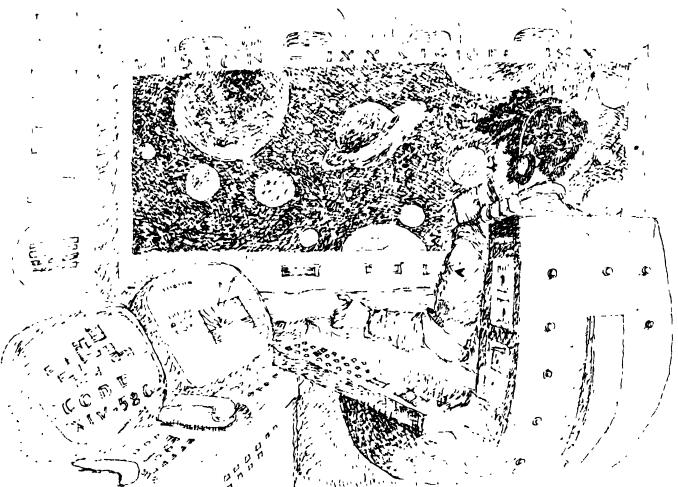
Capt. Khan left the control cabin reluctantly. At the back of his mind was the niggling feeling that he had missed something in the briefing. Could Commander Patil have purposely kept him in the dark about the mission? Why had Capt. MacGreal been sent to that region of the asteroid belt? Something special there? Why had XIV-586 been specifically selected for the mission? 'Watch out,' he told himself, 'something fishy is in store.' He had to be extremely careful.

Capt. Khan boarded the cylinder-shaped spacecraft Vision-IXX, switched on the rocket engines and waited for the clearance signal from the port. His spacecraft was inside a long tunnel at the top of which was a circular door which slowly opened on

the star-spangled panorama of space. Slowly
and steadily, the spacecraft rose up in the tunnel,
went out of its circular
mouth, drifted away from
the space platform, then
steadied and oriented
itself in the direction of
the asteroid belt, and
finally fired its main
rockets. With an orangish
flare Vision-IXX disappeared into the starstudded panorama.

Capt. Khan watched the inverted hat-like structure of the space platform Orbit-5 become a blur and then disappear. His spacecraft was racing towards the hazy patches ahead which were like islands in the ocean. Soon. these patches turned into huge stony rocks which appeared as though they were tumbling through space. Huge scars, cracks, crevices and several vellow and white blotches marked their otherwise irregular and sometimes sharp surfaces—all indications of the rough times through which those asteroids had been, or were going through because of close proximity to each other.

Asteroids have always been colliding or rubbing against each other, breaking each other, producing smaller bodies, still



smaller bodies and dust. They were, therefore, a heterogenous group of bodies, some as huge as mountains and some as small as a pebble, even smaller than a dust particle. It naturally required considerable skill to navigate a spacecraft through such a mixture of bodies which blocked radio link with any spacecraft inside as well as outside the asteroid belt.

Capt. Khan was certainly confident of his navigational skills. What he was uncertain of were the surprises Commander Patil had talked of. He

pressed some buttons on the panels, "Commander Patil, this is Capt. Khan of Vision-IXX reporting!" he shouted into the receiver. "I'm entering the asteroid belt zone. Over!"

Before Commander
Patil could respond he had
disconnected the radio
link. Thereafter he was on
his own, depending upon
his own reflexes and skills
of navigation to see him
through the asteroid belt.
His sole companion then,
was the spacecraft's
computer which was
lovingly addressed as
"Monty". Before entering
the asteroid zone he
switched Monty on. The

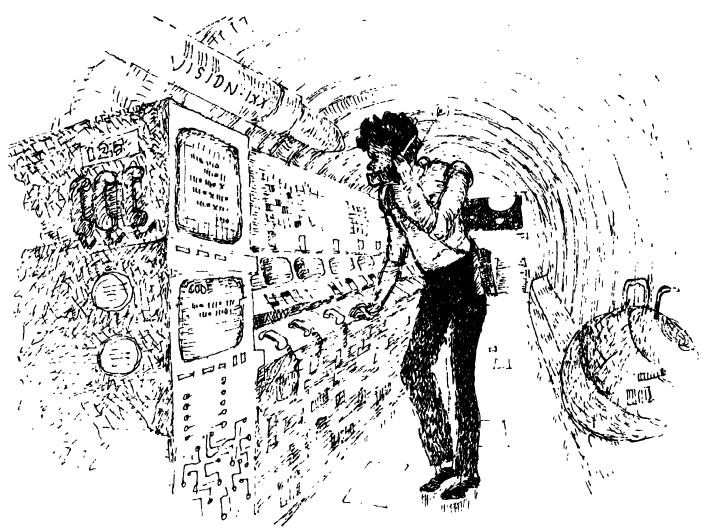
loneliness of space and the fear of the unknown made him feel the necessity for some company.

"Hello, Capt. Khan!
Monty here!" said a metallic voice in its usual cheerful tone. "How come you
thought of me? I hope
everything is fine?"

"Yes, Monty, I am fine! I just thought of..."

"Hey, watch out! Capt. Khan!..."

A huge craggy asteroid suddenly came in the path of the spacecraft emitting minute sparks of electric charges. Capt. Khan skilfully dodged the oncoming asteroid as it



tumbled into space on his right. The flashing electric charges indicated that the body of Vision-IXX had just rubbed against or broken off a much bigger body gathering electric charges which it immediately discharged into the neighbouring dust and pebbles.

"Oh, Monty!" exclaimed Capt. Khan, "you saved me in the nick of time! That was a close shave!..."

"You better be on guard, Nawaz!" advised Monty. "This region is highly hazardous and tricky! What are you looking for here?" "Oh! I'm looking for the asteroid XIV-586. These are its characteristics," said Capt. Khan and began to feed in the information on XIV-586 to the computer of the spacecraft. "Size—about 14.8 kilometres. General appearance—oval. Special marks, two huge craters on the sun-facing side. Spectral characteristics..."

Shortly, the computer began to scan the stone-like bodies in the range of 50 kilometres from the spacecraft using a radar and laser. It took another few minutes to identify XIV-586 and give its exact

location at that moment; longitude 30 degrees East, Azimuth 64 degree North and distance 42.8 kilometres.

In the normal course, Capt. Khan would have simply fed these coordinates into the computer and directed the auto-pilot of the spacecraft to reach that point in space. But this was not possible in the asteroid belt where in every other corner lurked danger. A mere stone-like object could either puncture the body of the spacecraft or smash it into bits in the void of space. Capt. Khan had, therefore, to

manoeuvre through the space between the asteroids, taking sharp turns and twists, sometimes dodging bodies that suddenly began to move. What would, in normal course have taken just a few minutes, now took Capt. Khan about 48 minutes.

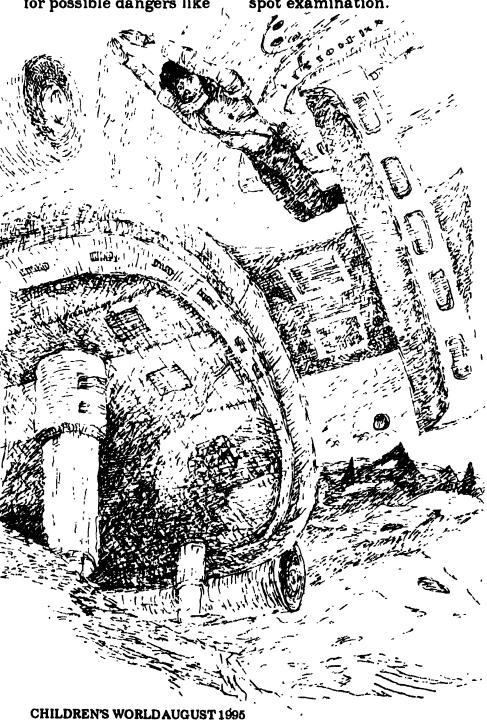
The asteroid XIV-586 was right ahead, an ovalshaped, craggy rock hidden behind a yellowish halo of dust and pebbles. The shroud imparted an air of the mysterious-which it certainly was. Capt. Khan knew he need not make any hasty moves that he would repent later. When XIV-586 was not more than four kilometres away he shut off the engines of his spacecraft and allowed it to drift slowly on its

"Monty! What do you think of this XIV-586?" asked Capt. Khan just to break the monotony. He had already directed the computer to check if any object fitting the description of Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft was present in the vicinity, and what its exact location was.

momentum.

"Well, it looks interesting..." Even before Monty could finish the sentence, a beep announced the discovery of Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft.
Contrary to Capt. Khan's expectations it was drifting only three kilometres away from the asteroid.
Shortly, it was right in front of him. Naturally apprehensive, Capt. Khan first ordered Monty to make the routine checks for possible dangers like

fatal microbes, deadly radiations, etc. that could still be lurking in the vicinity of the spacecraft. When all checks showed negative, including the close telescopic observation of the spacecraft, Capt. Khan had no option but to make an on-the-spot examination.



He donned his spacesuit, entered the airlock and jumped out into space. A pack of small rockets on his back zoomed him straight to the spacecraft. His first peep into the cockpit revealed Capt. MacGreal's body, slumped across the seat. Capt. Khan hastily broke open the emergency exit of the spacecraft using the tools from his backpack. He entered the cockpit, picked up Capt. MacGreal and manoeuvred his way back to the safety of his spacecraft.

Capt. MacGreal was very much alive but seemed to have lost consciousness. When Capt. Khan administered first aid, Capt. MacGreal opened his eyes and looked around. It was when he saw the halo of XIV-586 through the porthole at his side, that his face suddenly turned grey. He began to make queer sounds. He even pointed his finger at it, but could not speak coherently. He had obviously suffered a paralytic stroke. In fact, his spacecraft too seemed to have suffered a similar fate. What could have caused all this?' wondered Capt. Khan. Should I explore further? Or should I go

back and report the matter to Commander Patil?' He was in a fix. He had no option but to consult Monty.

"Well, it all depends on what your mission is," replied Monty in his metallic voice. "If your mission is simply to bring back Capt. MacGreal, then it is over! But if it is to find out what exactly went wrong, then you better proceed further."

"That means, I have to proceed further and find out what did go wrong. Capt. MacGreal's condition only indicates some danger in the neighbourhood of XIV-586. I will have to be careful!..."

"Very, very careful, my dear Nawaz," said Monty. "Your answer lies in Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft!"

"Yes, you're absolutely right, Monty!" exclaimed Capt. Khan, startled by the answer. He knew he was too involved in what was happening and had not therefore thought of the obvious. But Monty could analyse the situation logically, without bias or emotion. "I will go and examine the spacecraft now."

In a short while, Capt. Khan was off into space. He re-entered MacGreal's spacecraft, examined the

dashboard and equipment. All terminals were dead, indicating that something had hit the electronic circuits so severely that they were damaged beyond repair. It was quite likely that the same force had paralysed Capt. MacGreal. Capt. Khan decided to perform what would have been considered the most ridiculous experiment back on Mars. He decided to push the spacecraft towards XIV-586! This would probably set off the same reaction that had caused the damage initially. Only this time he would be there to see it happen.

Capt. Khan took two small, solid-fuel rockets from his spacecraft, attached them to Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft, and activated them using remote control. As the rockets flared up momentarily, the spacecraft lunged forward and then headed straight for XIV-586. Back in the cockpit of his spacecraft Capt. Khan had switched on all the observation equipment spectroscopes, radars, telescopes, radiation sensors and biosensors. He waited with bated breath as Capt. MacGreal's spacecraft

went on its way to XIV-586.

Just as the spacecraft was about to disappear into the asteroid's halo, it seemed to have caused an enormous storm which engulfed it from all sides. Tentacles of lightning flashed left and right in the haze surrounding XIV-586. Then all was still. The halo looked as innocent as it had appeared earlier. However, the radar in Capt. Khan's spaceship clearly showed that MacGreal's spacecraft had been smashed into bits and all those bits were slowly falling on the surface of the asteroid. Obviously, the air nay, dust—surrounding the asteroid was charged with electricity which pounced upon any metallic object that came near it.

If one needed to land on the asteroid, the electricity stored in its surrounding dust had to be discharged first. But, how did this electricity come to be stored in the halo in the first place? Capt. Khan knew neither how to discharge stored electricity nor what created it in the first place. He, therefore, decided to call off his mission of landing on XIV-586 because his report for Commander Patil was complete. To unravel the rest of the mystery of XIV-586 was the job of the thinktank of Asteroid Exploration Project.

*

The committee of the Asteroid Exploration Project headed by Dr. Amis Roget listened



eagerly to the findings of Capt. Khan's mission to asteroid XIV-586. It arrived at the conclusion that XIV-586 had become electrically charged when it collided with and rubbed against other asteroids. Gold being the best conductor of electricity, XIV-586 had gathered considerable electricity but could not store it. This leaked into the neighbouring dust. It was the electrically charged dust that formed a halo round the asteroid and paralysed Capt. MacGreal's first space mission to it. The question

of how to discharge the electricity completely from the halo of asteroid XIV-586, so that a spacecraft could land on its surface and excavate the several tons of gold ore from it, then challenged the committee. The only solution offered, was to disperse the dust so that the halo would no longer be charged. Some specially made explosives could do the job, the committee claimed.

The document however did not say anything more on this particular asteroid although it does give some idea about the exploratory missions of other asteroids. Is it possible that no more attempts were made to reach XIV-586? But that does not appear possible, because the lure of gold is very strong in the human psyche. Quite likely, attempts on XIV-586 were made quietly and the gold was collected and shared among the people concerned with the mission and its project!

Or, quite possibly the gold is still there, amongst the asteroids waiting for a bold and adventurous spaceman to venture out and fetch it... who knows...?

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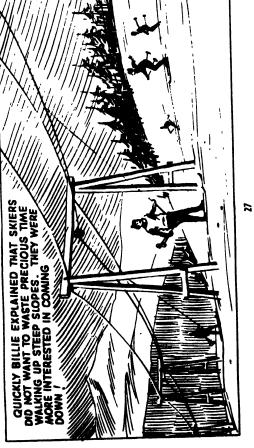
OUR LAIRD'S A LASSIE - PART 4

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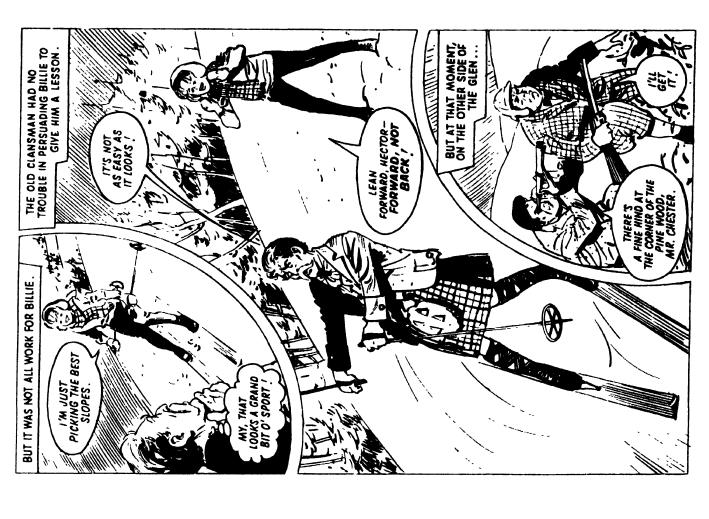
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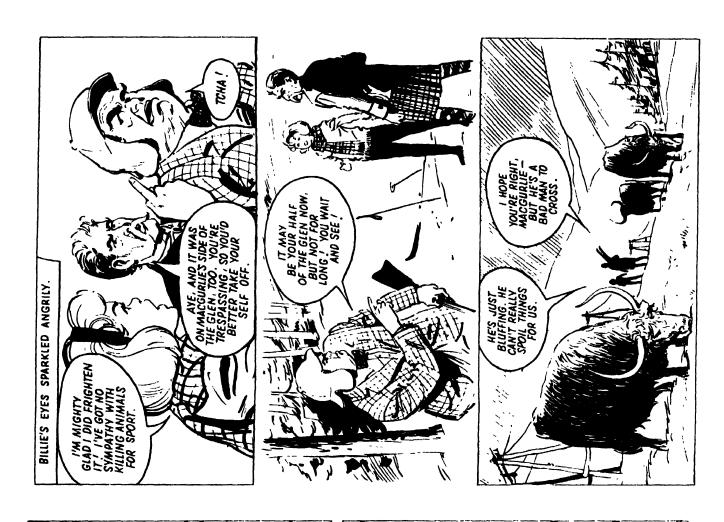




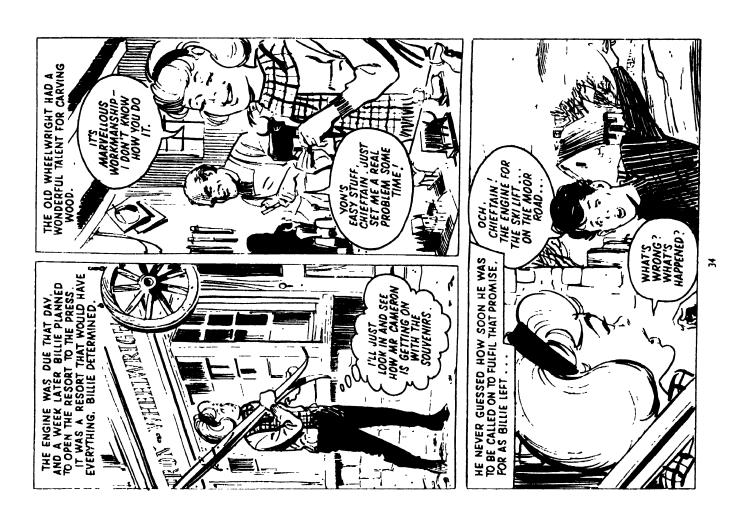
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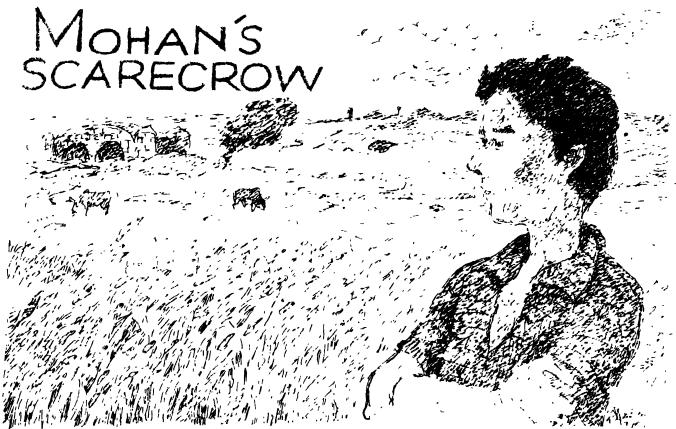












Story: Vernon Thomas

T the village school, Mohan was the cleverest boy in his class. His father and mother were very proud of him.

"My son will be a great man some day," his father would always say. "Who knows, Mohan might become a doctor, when he grows up."

But Mohan did not wish to be a great man when he grew up. Nor did he want to become a doctor. Mohan wanted to be a farmer, like his father. He did not tell his father this, because he did not like to hurt him.

However, at last, Mohan felt he *must* tell

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

his father. So one day he said to him, "Baba, I know you will not be pleased to hear this. But I don't want to be a great man when I grow up. I don't want to become a doctor. I want to be a farmer, like you."

"But don't you like to study?" asked his father in surprise. "Don't you want to leave this village when you grow up? Don't you want to be a great man and work in the city?"

"Yes, Baba, I do like to study," answered Mohan. "But I still want to be a farmer, like you. I don't ever want to leave this village to live in the city. I am so happy here."

Mohan's father was very sad to hear this. Like most Indian fathers, he had all along dreamed that his son would be a great man some day. He, poor man, had not had a chance to study. But now, he felt that his wish for his son would never come true.

"But, Beta!" he said to his son, "the life of a farmer is not at all easy. If you go to the city and find a job when you grow up, you will earn a lot of money."

But still Mohan shook his head. He said, "No, Baba, I don't care about money. I want to be a farmer, like you. I don't mind how hard I have to work."

So seeing that Mohan had quite made up his mind, his father fell to thinking. He thought over the matter for a day or two. Then, at last, he said to his son, "All right, Beta, as you wish! It is your life, after all. But before I agree, I would like to see what sort of a farmer you will make."

Having said this, he took Mohan by the hand. He led him to a small plot of land, pointing to which he said, "Now, Beta, I want you to grow something on this land. I am not going to help you, as this is a test to see if you will be a good farmer."

"Oh, thank you, Baba!" cried Mohan, greatly pleased. "I will show you that I can be a really good farmer."

As it was school holiday time, Mohan fell to work at once. Fetching a spade, he began to prepare the soil for sowing. It was hot out there in the sun, and very soon he was sweating. But Mohan did not mind, as now he felt he was close to having his wish granted.

While he was busy, along came his friend, Raju.

"Why, Mohan, what are

you doing?" asked Raju.

So Mohan told Raju the story, and at the end Raju said, "But that is wonderful, Mohan! Do let me help you!"

But Mohan shook his head firmly. "Thank you, Raju! But no! I must do this work all by myself. I must prove to *Baba* that I can be a good farmer."

So Raju sat to chat, while Mohan worked. Till soon the soil was ready for sowing and though Mohan was very tired he did not stop. Off he went at once and fetched a handful of grain. He scattered the grain all over the land. Only then was he satisfied.

"Now, Raju, that's the first job done," he said to his friend happily. "Tomorrow morning I will come early to water the land."

However, next morning though he woke up early, Mohan arrived to find that some naughty sparrows had visited his land earlier. They had eaten all the grain which he had scattered the day before.

"Oh dear! How tiresome!" said Mohan to himself. "Now I will have to scatter some more grain."

When he had fetched the grain, and was busy scattering it, Raju arrived. "What are you doing?" asked Raju.

So Mohan told Raju about the sparrows, and how they had eaten up all the grain.

"But tonight, Raju," he added, "I will sleep here on the land. That way, when the sparrows come, I will be able to drive them away."

Thus, Mohan slept that night on his little plot of land. But, alas! He slept so long and so sound, that by the time he woke, the sparrows had already been and finished the grain.

"Oh, what will I do, Raju?" said Mohan when his friend arrived. "This way Baba will not believe that I can be a good farmer."

"Don't worry, Mohan!" said Raju. "We will build a scarecrow. When the birds see the scarecrow, they will be too afraid to come and eat the grain."

"A very good idea!" cried Mohan, and the two friends set to work at once.

First Mohan cut two stout branches from a tree. One branch he stuck firmly into the ground, as the body of the scarecrow. The other branch he nailed across the first, to look like a pair of arms. For the head, Raju brought a large, round pumpkin. Removing its inside with his penknife, he stuck the hollow pumpkin on the body of the scarecrow. After which, Mohan cut out two holes for the eyes, one for the nose and a long, narrow slit for the mouth.

"Your scarecrow looks fine," said Raju, clapping his hands in delight.

"He's not quite ready yet," said Mohan, and off he went to fetch one of his father's old shirts, which he next dressed the scarecrow in.

"He only needs a turban now," pointed out Raju.

Upon which, Raju now fetched a strip of cloth,

which together they wound into a turban. Placing the turban on the scarecrow's head, the two friends stepped back to look.

"He looks just like an Indian farmer," said Raju.

"Oh, I'm so proud of him!" cried Mohan.

"Now let me see how those naughty birds come to eat my grain," said Mohan to Raju, as they went home together that evening. "My scarecrow will surely frighten them away."

However, next morning, to his great surprise,
Mohan found that in spite of the scarecrow, the sparrows had been and eaten the grain.

"Oh dear!" said Mohan to himself, as his eyes filled with tears. "Those birds are not even afraid of my scarecrow. What will I do? Now Baba will not believe that I can be a good farmer."

Soon Raju arrived to hear the sad news. He, too, could not understand why the scarecrow had failed to scare the birds away.

However, Mohan was not the sort of boy to give up easily. He scattered yet some more grain. But next morning he found that the birds had been and eaten it all.

"Silly scarecrow!" said Mohan aloud, as he sat down now and began to sob. "Whatever shall I do?"

"Why are you crying, Mohan?" asked a voice of a sudden, and as Mohan looked up, he saw it was old Lakshman, the village barber.

"I am crying because my scarecrow does not scare the birds away," answered Mohan. "If I cannot grow something on this land, *Baba* will not believe that I can be a good farmer."

"But how can your scarecrow scare the birds away?" replied Lakshman at once. "Take a look at him! What do you see, Mohan?"

But though Mohan dried his eyes and looked hard, he could see nothing strange. As he shook his head, Lakshman laughed.

"Mohan, you are such a clever boy," said
Lakshman. "But you must learn to use the eyes that
God gave you. Haven't you noticed? Your scarecrow is a smiling scarecrow. He looks so friendly. No wonder the birds are not afraid of him!"

As Mohan looked at his scarecrow again, he could see now that what Lakshman said was true. His scarecrow had a wide, happy smile on his face.

"Oh dear!" said Mohan.

"How silly of me!" He does look friendly. No wonder the birds are not afraid of him!

"But what must I do?" he went on to ask. "How can I make him frighten those birds away?"

"Now just think, Mohan!" advised Lakshman.

And as Mohan did not quite know what to think, Lakshman opened his barber's box. He took out a mirror and handed it to Mohan.

"Look at yourself, Mohan!" he said. "What do you see?"

"I see my face," replied Mohan at once, staring hard into the mirror.

"True! But what sort of a face is it?" asked Lakshman.

"Well, it is not a happy face," said Mohan.

"Then make it a happy face," said Lakshman, and as Mohan smiled into the mirror next, Lakshman asked, "What do you see now, Mohan?"

"I see my smiling face," answered Mohan.

Then of a sudden, as he turned to look at his scarecrow again, at once Mohan understood what Lakshman was trying to tell him.

"Oh, thank you!" he cried. "Now I know. When

I smile my mouth changes its shape, to give me a happy look. I must change the shape of my scarecrow's mouth, to make him look less friendly."

As Lakshman nodded in agreement, he handed Mohan a razor from his box. Taking the razor, Mohan hurried up to his scarecrow. He cut a piece away from either side of the scarecrow's mouth.

Now the scarecrow was not smiling any longer. He did not look friendly. In fact he looked so stern, that even Mohan was a little afraid to look at him at first.

But with this the problem was solved. For truly from now on the scarecrow did his job well. Seeing his stern face, the sparrows would not dare to come near Mohan's land. As a result, Mohan's grain soon took root. Soon there were small plants. Next, tall, strong plants. And finally a very good crop.

Mohan was very happy. So was Raju. So was Mohan's father, as now he could see that his son would one day be a good farmer, like himself. With one important difference, though. Mohan would also be able to read and write.

The Most Wonderful Book

Text: I.M. Soni

Illustrations: Seema Pandey

AVE you ever wondered which book is the most wonderful in the world? It is the dictionary. But do you know how much the dictionary can do for you?

You can learn the origin of a word. Look up the word "clerk" for instance, in Webster's unabridged dictionary. You will find about a dozen meanings. The earliest meaning of the word was a "clergyman". The meaning with which we are most familiar, "one employed to keep records or accounts", came later.

You are familiar with the word "quiz". It was coined by a Dublin theatre owner over a bet with a friend. He did not know its meaning. Nor did anyone else but the word stuck. Now you know why "quiz" is a "quiz".

The dictionary provides many different meanings for the same word. You must have had the experience of seeing a familiar word used in a way which makes you think that the author or the speaker knows more about the word than you do.

It was a "nice" decision by the umpire.

"Nice"? Look up the word "nice" and you find that one definition is: "demanding close

discrimination or treatment; calling for minute analysis". "Nice" also means "pleasing, agreeable".

The dictionary also gives you synonyms. Synonyms are words that mean almost the same thing. Look up the words that you use very often and see if some of the synonyms will do the same job.

English is so rich in synonyms that a good game can be made of finding three synonyms and assigning them to "I", "You", or "he".

The idea is to use the most flattering variant of the word for "I" and work

down to the most insulting for "he". For example: I am determined, you are stubborn, he is pig-headed. Now, look for "pig" and see how you can enrich your vocabulary.

The dictionary tells you what foreign expressions mean and how to pronounce them. Are you sure of ad hoc and sang froid?

There are abbreviations such as *ibid. n.d., et seq.*You can find most abbreviations in an unabridged dictionary: shorter dictionaries carry only those most commonly used.

Some dictionaries carry names of places and some information about them. The location and size of cities, rivers, and countries are yours for the looking-up.

New words are for ever getting into the dictionary. An expression is admitted when it has been used for a long time. Or when it appears in a written work that will probably be read for some time to come. This is how gherao entered the dictionary.

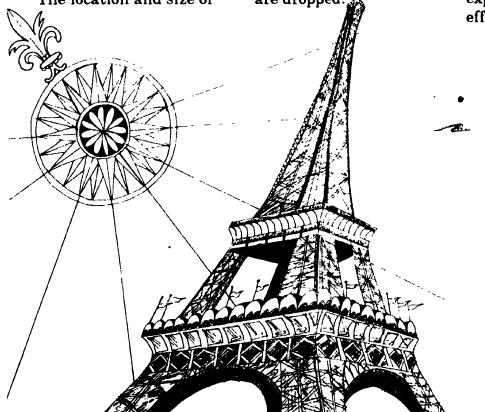
Words go out of the dictionary, too. They are admitted on probation, so to speak. They may be put in a separate section or they may be added to the general list but tagged as slang, colloquial, or dialogue. If they survive for years, the tag is dropped. If not, the words are dropped.

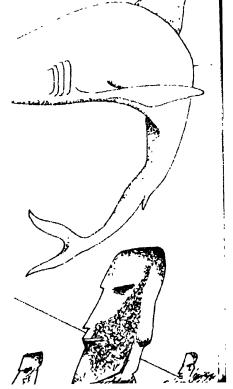
Some words called "ghosts" get in. An interesting example is "dord". It appeared in Webster's but made an exit in 1948. Others "die" but do not go out of the dictionary. Dead as the dodo!

The boon of an abridged dictionary is that it is easy to handle and keep on your desk or take to college or school.

Dictionaries give special information, such as mathematical tables, conversion tables (for English-system measures to the metric-system, for instance), and symbols in use in special fields.

It is a fascinating book! It increases your ability to express and communicate effectively.





Books Children Write

Priscilla Rebels By Maya Chandrasekharan Illustrated by Asit Bagchi Published by Rupa & Co. Price: Rs.60/-

It is several decades since the British left us. Enid Blyton, who was once the sole literary diet on which the young were fed, has many competitors. Times have changed we are told. Yet, we are still suffering from a colonial and 'Blyton' hangover. Enid Blyton wrote with masterly skill about the children of her country... but alas! the boarding school adventures created by Indian writers fall far short of our expectations or any acceptable standards of writing.

It is heartening, though, to see young children—or should one say young adults—attempting to write full-fledged novels. But a word of caution to Maya Chandrasekharan who would do well to understand that, like all else in Nature, the creative writing process too must

be given adequate time to develop and mature so that the final creation is perfect, complete in thought, sensitivity and skill. In the haste to publish whatever one has written, there should be no compromise on quality.

Priscilla Rebels is an example of 'too much, too early'. Apart from the main idea or theme, a good novel involves a high degree of craftsmanship. Characters and events form the warp and weft of any story, whereas the details, the descriptions, the emotions, the language and the insight of the author bring to the basic weave or story a vividity of design that make it stand out.

The book lacks a gripping story-line probably because the events and characters are forced on a setting which, too, seems borrowed from an alien culture. Too many characters with too many difficult names are distracting. Names are reeled off at the drop of a hat adding to the confusion. Fewer characters dealt with in greater depth would have been more effective. At the

end of the book, there is no single character that lingers in one's memory. They all remain two dimensional, paper characters. Priscilla emerges as a not-too-likeable character with whom a child cannot—probably will not choose to—identify himself.

But the major responsibility for its publication rests with Rupa & Co. which, from the stages of selection of a manuscript to its final publication, functions—to put it mildly—in mysterious ways.

Knowing that it is a work for children, and knowing that the author is so young, it should have been imperative (I shall not use an outdated expression like 'their moral duty') to bring out a flawless book. Instead we have a book that is riddled with errors in grammar, syntax, spellings et al. No attempt has been made to correct them; correct punctuation and spellings seem to be on a holiday, whereas proof reading bloomers are aplenty. Sentences and paragraphs are broken up with scant

regard for its structure to read like this: ... Malini piped up, "Very possibly Twish was a monster of the same sort when she was the kid's age!" teasingly! (Page 50). Note the paragraph break-ups in the extract below:

Nishta said, "... You two are about the only decent seniors in school!" Shilpa said in a supposed severe tone.

"Cheek!" and Archana grinned, "Laying the butter on pretty thick aren't you?"...

Nishta makes the first comment, Shilpa says 'Cheek' and Archana adds her bit about flattery. But even an intelligent reader would have to read it several times over to understand it. What it does to the flow of reading is best left unsaid.

Simple words too are not spared: 'Alright' (P. 97), 'atlast' (P. 51, 142), 'atleast', 'ofcourse' (P. 136) which should rightly go as two words are clubbed as one; on the other hand, words like 'where as' and 'over work' (P. 121), which should be single words are treated as two.

Is the editor aware that the word is 'incidentally' and not 'incidently' (P.105), 'principally' and not'principly' (P.126), 'splendid' and not 'splendourful' (P.109) as

has been concocted. Could we leave the creativity to the authors? Moreover. Matron has been described as 'peppery' (P.65) Not the usual peppery Matron, but a quieter, worried one —surely the word the editor is looking for is 'peppy'? Punctuation errors, grammatic as well as thematic mistakes and inconsistencies sound the death knell for the book. The word 'hers' never takes on an apostrophe as in 'her's' (P.136). When one reads a sentence like 'Sometime they turn out alright' one wonders whether one is reading B-grade literature. Words that should go in quotes are left on the wayside like waifs.

"She faltered, But...
but... "Stop behaving like
a goat" '(P.104). The
teacher, Miss Malavika, is
referred to as 'Malavika'
several times (unlike
other teachers who are
called Miss Patil, Miss
Rohit etc.) on page 134
and yet suddenly she is
'Miss Malavika' on the
same page... Whither
consistency?

Slang has been used liberally, possibly in keeping with the changing times which is indifferent to the use of language. Yet, such excessive usage as in the book jars and detracts from the story

rather than adding to it.

There are thematic discrepancies too. After a tense moment Kusuma, Zainab, Aparna, Swarna and Malini decide to go swimming. But, remember? All of them are in quarantine—so swimming is the last thing they can or will be allowed to do. Even a semi-alert editor would not let such a lacuna pass.

Similarly, certain actions do not fit in with the characters they are attributed to. Nishta, the naughtiest girl, full of pranks, is hardly likely to drop off to sleep, in the manner described on page 104.

These are just a few glimpses of the numerous pitfalls one encounters as one proceeds through the book. One is left with a degree of anguish for the children who are the forced victims of editorial casualness and insincerity.

Finally, several words on the illustrations. The first reaction to them is revulsion. Distorted, ugly, disproportionate and not even in a remote way visually appealing, they will, decidedly, put off the most valiant of readers.

Maya Chandrasekharan! You and all other authors—young or old are well within your rights to demand an explanation for such a shoddy treatment and production of your book.

Surely, Rupa & Co., you owe us better?

Sudha Sanjeev

What Kids WantTheir ParentsTo Know By Ryan Holladay Illus. by Tim Ladwig Published by Excel Books New Delhi 1995 Price Rs.35/-

If you are a 'kid', then of course, this book is God's answer to your most fervent prayer. If you are an adult, you wistfully wish you had it, when you were a preteen. If you are a parent, you have much to thank Ryan Holladay and his friends for painstakingly compiling this book. Even if you instinctively feel like collecting other parent friends to compile your personal sequel entitled What Parents Want their Kids to Know...

The raison d'etre, to use an apt French term, for the 'purpose' of writing such a book definitely demands examination, and 11-year-old Ryan Holladay gives a more than convincing explanation in his Introduction. "You Parents are funny," says he. "Even though you were once preteens yourselves, it seems that most of you have forgotten that

period of your life." ..."It's really a weird one—going from being a little kid to a teenager. It is a time of change and challenge—physically, emotionally, socially.

"Yet even though this is a tough time for us all, we need your support, your friendship, your guidance, and most of all, your love."...

"This is one important time for us. We only travel this road together once. Let's make the most of it."

And if you—parent or preteen—wish to make the most of it, rush for this very affordable Indian edition priced at Rs.35/-.

Since the book has been written in a very pro-American context, there are many "suggestions" that both Indian parents as well as children will find rather like stating the obvious, like "Family activities really make me feel close to everyone", because we in India still interact as a family unit rather than as individuals in a unit, and maybe Indian parents would shrug at something like "Hang out with me sometimes". But believe me, the book is mostly full of endearingly heart-stopping suggestions like "Keep praying for me. It makes me feel secure." Or

"Set high moral standards for me." "Wear your seat belt. You're important to me." "I enjoy seeing my parents hug." "Spread your love around. Give equal attention to each child in the family."

"Keep telling me you love me and are proud of me." Of course 'kids' could do the same for their parents, couldn't they?

There are some tonguein-cheek ones too. "Always buy me clothes that are in fashion, not something you would wear."

"I like it when you have fun with my friends and me. They usually don't see parents acting so crazy."

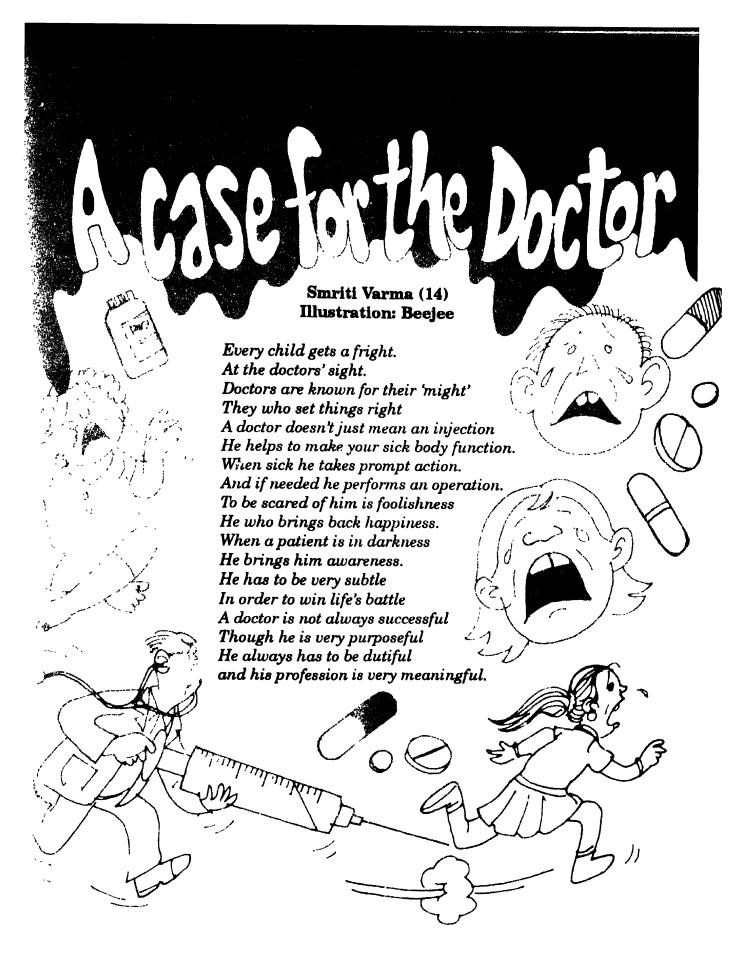
And some very practical, acceptable ones that we don't give voice to—usually.

"Don't be sarcastic."
"Teach me right and wrong."

"Help me to learn some world geography. I need to understand other people, other places."

It's like one said at the beginning of the review. This is really a book for all ages, all seasons—each suggestion is a gem in itself. Acquire the book—present it to your parents and read it together. After all, as Ryan so aptly put it—"We only travel this road together once. Let's make the most of it."

Vaijayanti Tonpe





BHOOLUA



Story: Sukhendu Dutta

was on my way to the holy shrine high up on the mountain. In front of me, were four men carrying an easy-chair in which sat an old man wrapped in costly shawls. Then followed a brown horse without a saddle and a man mounted upon it with the guide by his side. But looking at the serene and picturesque surroundings and the splendid greenery of the hills, I was tempted to make the journey on foot, whatever the hardships.

The mountain track, which ran parallel to a river, was as beautiful as it was dangerous. The road, right upto the ancient centre of pilgrimage, was not more than ten feet wide. It was made of

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

colourful stones and boulders-red, green. yellow, blue, pink and white. All along the road were lush green hills with a variety of plants, bamboo groves, wild grass, thick undergrowth and behind them, more trees, thicker and greener. And on the right, some fifty feet below, quietly flowed the river Mandakini. The hill-jungle on the other side of the river was deep green with its tall trees and forest groves.

It was a pleasure to walk along this road with the scent of green grass and trees. It was shady with the branches of the leafy trees forming a canopy above us. The sun's rays filtered in through the branches. The

greenery on both sides of the road with weeds, flowering creepers, thriving plants and a variety of trees fascinated me. Among the trees I could see a few amla trees. Green amlas hung from twigs. Some of the fruits were yellowish. Wild grass had grown on the rounded rocks of the hill. The rocks, with a tuft at the bottom, looked like the thoughtful faces of Tibetan lamas with scruffy beards! I looked admiringly at the cluster of verdant bamboos. I had never seen so many varieties. But none of the bamboos were more than ten feet high. They cannot grow taller on the rocky hills. But small is beautiful. I shall call them dwarf

bamboos or bonsai bamboos. Hundreds of wild flowers were blooming on the mountain slopes and along the bank of the river. Bunches of wild roses swayed in the breeze. I marvelled at the brilliantly coloured flowers, often grown in clumps, amidst thorn bushes. They were full blown and beautiful white, pink and red. Clusters of thin tubed, white flowers, like little marbles children play with, hung at the end of slender branches of climbing shrubs.

I walked as if in a dream, admiring the scenic beauty of the wooded hills. Nature is always at its best when left alone!

Birds, with their sweet songs and soft rustle of wings, made the walk pleasant. They fluttered across from time to time, to change perches.

A sudden rain in small drops caught the pilgrims unawares. Some scurried for shelter. I took refuge under a tree. The first raindrops were followed by the gentle pitter patter of rain. Some travellers hurried past me.

The rain poured incessantly. It was well past mid-day. I was due to start in the morning but

was late. So, draped in a mackintosh and wearing a cap, I decided to walk despite the rain.

But the rain god took pity on me. The downpour ceased as abruptly as it had begun. It was sunny again and the sky was bright. The green hills looked clear and fresh. Raindrops glistened like diamonds on the leaves and grass. The air was heavy with the scent of wild flowers, wet grass and leaves. A solitary bird, sitting on one side of



the road, was shaking off the raindrops from its feathers. As I got closer to it, the bird scurried into a nearby bush and disappeared. Instantly there was a 'tchick-tchick' and the bird, its tail twitching restlessly, greeted me from behind the bush!

A slight drizzle began as suddenly as it had stopped. I began to feel a bit depressed. The weather seemed to be against me. The nagging rain would prevent me from reaching the temple before sundown.

Evening came but it was still raining and the weather was turning chilly. The road now looked deserted. Not a soul was in sight. Several sadhus and hermits' makeshift hutments, with burning log-fire inside, dotted the road. But how could a weary traveller seek warmth and shelter there? Walking down the empty road, the only traveller and that too in a dhoti and kurta, I became the object of their curiosity.

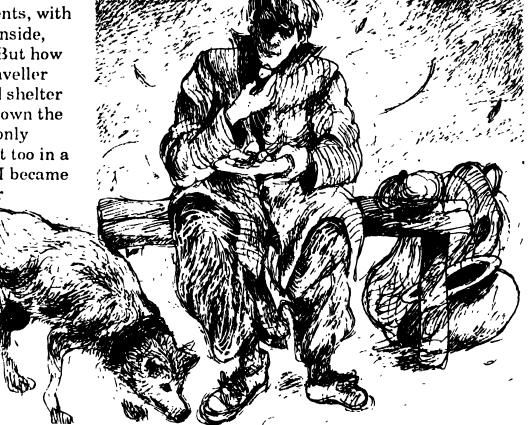
The shadow of the evening crawled steadily down the tree tops. It continued to drizzle although it was light. How would I ever reach the temple?

I breathed a sigh of relief when I saw a wayside tea-shop. I stopped outside it. A big water pot was bubbling on the open hearth. A few locals were sitting inside the shop, chit-chatting by the fireside.

The middle-aged shopkeeper looked up, smiling a welcome. He invited me for tea and a much-needed rest by the fire. I stepped inside. A hot cup of tea after five hours of tardy walking would be refreshing indeed. The small tea-shop was selling simple items like wheat bread, tea and pakoras. After a long tedious walk, a cup of hot tea and a plateful of hot pakoras was invigorating. It was exhilarating to sit by the fireside in the chilling wind.

The pakoras were really delicious. The shopkeeper put more firewood on the fire and requested me to relax. But it was still drizzling and the sun was ready to dip behind the hills. I would have to begin my walk again.

I got up to stretch my limbs. Suddenly someone touched my feet. I looked down with a start. It was a big, red-coated, furry dog, larger than an



Alsatian! I had seen it sleeping in one corner of the shop. The animal had touched my feet with its front paws.

He's "Bhoolua!" the shopkeeper laughed.

"Bhoolua?" I looked at him in askance.

"Yes, Babu!" he replied.
"The dog is hungry now."
The dog nuzzled my legs
and tried to lick my feet
with his rough tongue. I
moved aside in fright.

"Don't panic, Babu!" assured the man.

"But look at his terrible claws!"

"Bhoolua is begging for food," said the shopkeeper, shaking his head.

The dog retreated to one corner of the shop and looked at me with soft eyes.

"Bhoolua is hungry today," said the man. "The pilgrims offer him meals and scraps. Only a few pilgrims have come to visit the temple today. They too haven't stopped here because of the inclement weather."

I purchased two rotis from the shopkeeper and offered them to the dog. He cast a greedy look at them. Hungrily he ate the food and tried to rub his nose on my feet, wagging his tail.

Outside, it was still raining. I asked the

shopkeeper if any one of them would go up the hill, so that I could accompany him.

"No, Babu!" he shook his head. "We'll now close the shop and go to our village at the foothill."

"Then I'll have to walk alone in the dark and rain?"

"Why alone, *Babu?*" The man tried to be helpful. "Bhoolua will escort you to the temple."

Hearing his name Bhoolua opened his eyes and pricked up his ears.

"Bhoolua?" I asked in disbelief. "The dog? Oh no, no!"

The man assured me with a smile, "You won't get a better friend and guide on the road, Babu!"

I was still hesitant. But it was near sunset and darkness was fast enveloping the hill-jungle. And to add to my misery, a chill rain was falling steadily. I did not know where to take shelter for at the night.

The shopkeeper called, "Bhoolua!"

The dog, wagging his tail, came near him. The man patted the dog affectionately. "Escort him to the temple, Bhoolua!" said he, pointing out to me.

The dog looked at me. A frown of worry clouded my face. To go alone with this



dreaded dog? One could never be sure when the fierce animal would turn violent!

"Bholua is extremely good, *Babu*!" said the shopkeeper as if reading my thoughts. "You can safely go with him."

Bhoolua went out of the shop and walked a few steps. But I stood still. The dog turned round and barked, 'Bow-wow!' as if to say, "Come on!"

I raised my eyes and looked at the forested hills. "I've heard there are black bears high up in the hill-jungle!" said I, uneasily.

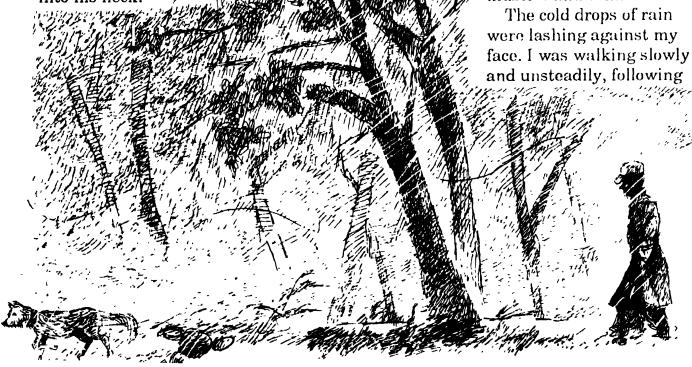
"Bhaloo!" the shopkeeper laughed. "Even the panthers and tigers are afraid of Bhoolua! The metal collar round his neck prevents the animals from sinking their teeth into his neck."

Bhoolua advanced a few steps. He had become restless. I quietly stepped out and followed him. The men cheered me up from behind, "Go on, Babu! You've given him food. Bhoolua will even die of loyalty to you." They smiled a warm farewell.

We walked slowly. It was not easy to walk on the rain-soaked road. The narrow road was treacherous. Moreover it was quite dark by now. I kept closer to the rock-walls of the mountain for my dear life. If somehow I were to lose a foothold, it would land me fifty feet below, in the

swift-flowing Mandakini!

But Bhoolua was watchful. He walked a few yards ahead of me and kept a sharp eye to see whether I was following the correct path. Like a watchful guard, he was scrutinizing every bush on the sides of the road. He snarled whenever the young shoots of a bush moved or a broken twig crackled. He knew very well when to walk fast and when to go slow. Sometimes his eyes would burn looking at the dark. With his back arched, he would growl for no apparent reason. Suddenly, he ran towards a dark undergrowth baring his strong, white teeth. Was an animal hiding in the thick undergrowth? Bhoolua looked so threatening with his burning eyes, rippling muscles and canine teeth!



Bhoolua at a short distance. Suddenly he let out an angry growl and rushed forward. I shuddered and looked at him with my rain-soaked eyes. Had he seen a wild animal?

After an hour's walk, the rain ceased. The weather was clear again. The view around me also changed. All of a sudden, the trees, plants and bushes gave up racing along with us. The end of the forest on both sides of the road was surprisingly sudden. Now it was too high for plants and trees to grow. Only a thin line of trees stretched far out across the river.

The last lap of the journey was pleasant. Suddenly my eyes caught sight of the white wooden bridge over Mandakini. Beaming with joy, I advanced and climbed the bridge. Below me was flowing the gurgling river!

Standing on the bridge, I looked at the splendid view of the holy shrine opposite the river. It made me forget all my hardships. I felt a warm glow in my heart. I had travelled miles defying the inclement weather and now it was all worth it. My long cherished dream had come alive!

I stood still and looked at the beauty of the stone temple in front of me. There were no sounds except that of the singing Mandakini below me. Suddenly the silence of the night was broken by the ringing of a bell, 'Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong,'

I was thrilled. The evening arati was being performed in the temple! The air vibrated with the solemn sound of the bell. How my heart was moved! And my feelings! I longed to cross the bridge and be in the temple.

Nestling at the foot of the temple were a cluster of shops. I decided to purchase a few *chapatis* from a shop for my friend and guide, Bhoolua. But, where was he? I looked back. He was behind me, standing below the bridge and looking at me expectantly. I called him, "Bhoolua!"

'Bow-wow!' Bhoolua barked, his eyes shining in the dark. But he did not cross the bridge.

"Come on, Bhoolua!" I called him again.

'Bow-wow!' Bhoolua responded, but did not budge.

I raised my voice, "Bhoolu-aaa-aaa!"

Bhoolua answered and

reluctantly walked a few steps forward. But again he stopped. He would not cross the bridge. He turned back towards the path.

The night was dark. But innumerable stars were twinkling in the dark sky. Things were dimly visible in the starlit night. I could see his dark figure as he slowly walked away from me. I fell silent. Bhoolua was not in the habit of crossing the bridge. I had reached the temple. Now he was going back to his own place. He would return only escorting another helpless traveller like me! I could not take my eyes off him until he disappeared.

I crossed the bridge with a heavy heart. All this while I was eager to reach the holy shrine to have a darshan of the deity. But now I was no less eager to meet my Bhoolua again on my way back from the temple, when would I return.



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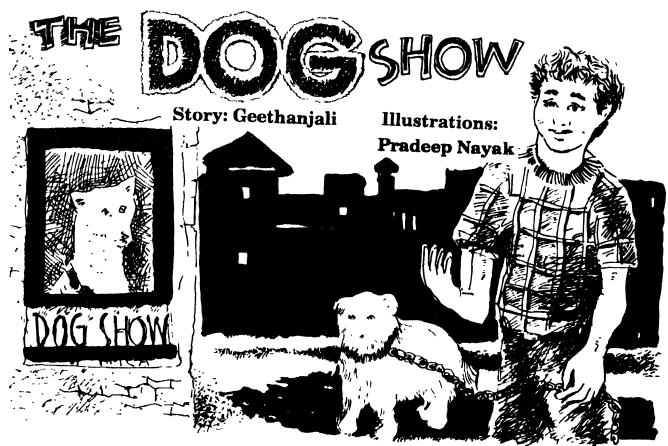
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EY, look,
Snoopy, there is a dog show being held in the YMCA grounds this Saturday!" my master, Akash, exclaimed as he read the big poster on the wall. I wagged my tail happily. Though I had never won in any of the dog shows that I had taken part in, I loved the excitement of preparing for one.

I gave a happy bark as Rishab and Vibav came walking towards us. "We must give in our names," Rishab, who was Akash's classmate, was saying. Vibav smiled as he saw me and went down on one knee to stroke my head.

Akash gave them one of his superior smiles. "I suppose you two mean to take your Smokey to the show. What a pair of dumbells! Don't you know that only pure-breds are allowed?"

The brothers exchanged a look and I could see Rishab's lips twitch. His voice however was perfectly grave as he said, "You are right, Akash. However, you can be sure that we will meet you at the dog show on Saturday. I'd love to see Snoopy win a cup!"

The brothers walked on. We stared after them. We saw their shoulders shake with laughter, "Gosh, I'm dying to see his face on Saturday when he sees..." Vibav chortled, but Rishab gave a warning "shhhh".

I smelt a rat, and from the look on Akash's face he did too. "They have something up their sleeve, Snoopy," he informed me. "Why do I have the feeling that it is a dog?" Then he said, "The brothers are on their way to their tennis class. I shall just pop into their house and investigate. Their mother will be at home. I shall pretend that I want to borrow a book."

We ran all the way to Rishab's house. I waited outside while Akash ran in Smokey, Rishab's old Laborador-Alsatian cross, began barking. I pricked up my ears as another high-pitched bark came from inside the house.

Akash was back in ten minutes' time. He looked as though he would burst. "They do have a dog, Snoopy! He is a Pomeranian like vou. He is one year old and the spitting image of you. On second thoughts, he is silkier and looks smarter than you. He is called Silky. Do you know he is Rishab's grandfather's dog? Rishab and Vibay brought him here only last week. They are taking him to the dog show on Saturday.

I wagged my tail and barked, trying to tell my master that I would do my best for him, but he only said rudely, "Stop yapping now, and let me think." Then he gave a grin, "I have it. I think that I shall win after all."

The next few days, much to my surprise, he ignored me completely. By Friday evening I was quite sure that I wasn't going to take part in the dog show after all. It was while I was sitting morosely, head on my paws, that he came running up to me. "Come on, Snoopy, Rishab and Vibay are

taking Silky for a walk. Now I want you to really pounce on Silky and fight. Got it?"

Numbly I followed him out onto the road where the brothers were walking Silky. Akash let go of my chain and I took my cue and leapt on Silky. Silky retaliated and soon we were both rolling over each other. "Silky!" Vibav yelled while Akash came towards us.

Much to my surprise he did not catch hold of my chain but went over and

caught Silky's chain. "Come on now, Snoopy, stop it!" he bellowed. I got the shock of my life. Had he got me mixed up with Silky? He looked at me and gave me a broad wink. "Go home with Rishab. They will think that you are their Silky. I shall take Silky home with me and enter him into the dog show as Snoopy. I'm sure I will win this time!" he said in a low voice.

I backed away in horror. How could Akash be



so cruel? Didn't he care a jot about my doggy feelings? I was so upset that I did not even demur when Rishab caught hold of me and examined me anxiously to see if I had injured myself.

I went home with Rishab and Vibay. Since they were not too familiar with Silky, as he had been at their grandfather's place all along, they did not notice that I was Snoopy, and not Silky. I spent a restless night longing for my home. Would Akash take me back once the dog show was over or would he prefer Silky? I gave a yelp at the thought and Vibav promptly hushed me.

The next morning, I could not help feeling excited when I saw how excited Vibav and Rishab were. "Come on, Silky, do your very best!" Rishab said as he gave me a hug. I decided then that I would do my best for the brothers.

We drove to the dog show. I must say I got the scare of my life when I jumped down from the car and bumped into a huge mastiff. I rushed back to the brothers and kept close to them while we walked past Alsatians, Great Danes and Boxers.

It was while we were in the waiting ring for Pomeranians that I saw my master. He gave us a wide berth and came up only when the call went out for him. He then pretended to be surprised to see us. Silky strained at his leash when he smelt the brothers, but Akash pulled him away. I looked down at my badge. I was Number 25 and Silky was 31.

The call went out for Pomeranians and I went in with Rishab. Akash refused to meet my eye as he went in with Silky. We went through a series of tests and I did my best. I ran well, I was the most obedient dog, and I did not snap at the judge's hand when he examined my teeth. The judge cleared his throat and called out the numbers of



the three finalists. "Numbers 31, 42 and (here I held my breath) 25, please stay back."

I had made it to the finals! Silky was there, too. We were made to run again and then 42 was sent out.

Silky and I stood before Akash and Rishab. It was now between us. We went through a few tests again. I did all this with alacrity but Silky was too busy straining at his leash trying to get near Rishab who he knew was his master.

"The winner is Number 25," the judge announced and shook Rishab's hand. I could hardly believe it! I,

Snoopy, had won!

My eyes shone and my tail wagged nineteen to a dozen as the judge put the ribbon round my neck. Rishab was given a cup. Rishab and Vibav fell over me in excitement.

It was then that a subdued Akash came up with Silky. "Hey, you guys, I think you have got my Snoopy over there. This dog, here, is your Silky. I think that they got mixed up in the fight they had last evening."

At first, the brothers were unconvinced. But when I ran over to Akash and Silky made a beeline for them, they realised that what Akash said was true.

"I wouldn't be surprised if you had exchanged the dogs on purpose!" Rishab said astutely. "Anyway, thanks for lending Snoopy to me. He really was the smartest dog at the show."

As Akash and I walked back to Akash's car I was prancing about in joy. "You won, Snoopy!" Akash said. "But I lost!"

"Yes," I barked in indignation. "Because you were a double-crosser. You ought to have believed in me, instead of running after someone you thought was smarter."

Akash was, for once, at a loss for words. I knew that he was kicking himself for his stupidity.



Sugandha Garg (10)

I smile, when

I see birds twittering in the blue sky,
When my garden is full of gladioli.
When I touch baby's skin,
And see a gift in a coloured tin.
When I watch beautiful paintings of hills,
And pictures of Arjuna at his skills.
When I see a town full of trees,
And sunset on seas.
When I stand in front of the mirror
And imagine I have long Rapunzel

like hair.

When I listen to jokes,
And watch animal folk.
When I see monkeys doing tricks,
And breaking bricks.
These are all my happy smiles.

PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

7556
Ranjita Purwar (15)
Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar
Block-A, Kalkaji
Extension
New Delhi 110019, India
Painting, reading
U.S.A., Japan

7557
Rekha Krishnan (13)
No. 1/1, 1st Main Road
Nehru Nagar, Adyar
Madras 600020
Tamil Nadu, India
Pen-friends, music
Any country

7558
Shilpa Tiwari (13)
c/o Mr. S.P. Tiwari
L.T.G. 6, Housing Board

Colony Katni Dist, Jabalpur Madhya Pradesh, India Dancing, stamps Japan, U.S.A.

7559
Subharsee (15)
598, Type IV
Laxmibai Nagar
New Delhi 110023, India
Painting
Any country

7560 Yusra Yamin (12) c/o Mohd. Yamin B-61/3 Manak Nagar Lucknow 226011 U.P., India Painting, watching T.V. Canada, India

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GIRLS

7561
Tao Tuna Tara (14)
c/o T. Tebin Tara
Deputy Director
Art & Culture & Social
Welfare
PO Naharlagun
Dist Papum Pare 791110
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Writing
Any country

7562
Nang Sonta (15)
d/o Ghow Phatra
Namchoom Cant
195 Guna Nagar
PO Ghowkham
Dist Lohit 792104
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Music, dancing
Any country

7563
D. Arim Ete (14)
c/o Mr. D. Ete (S.M.S.)
(R.W.D.)
Officer Line (A.E.E.)
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Reading, hiking
Any country

7564
Seema (15)
2418/7A Housing Board
Colony
Faridabad, Haryana
Pen-friendship
India

7565
Divya Chopra (10)
C-65 Kirti Nagar
New Delhi 110015, India
Reading, dancing
Any country

7566
Tasliha Sultana (12)
c/o Mr. R. Khanikar
PO Titabar
Near B.D.O. Office, Jorhat
Assam 785630, India
Pen-friendship, gardening
Any country
7567
Sonam Yangden (15)

Class X, Mongar High School Bhutan Pen-friendship, reading Other than India

7568
Som Yangdon (14)
c/o Sonam Dorji
General Shop, Mongar
Bhutan
Music, posters
Switzerland, Canada

7569
Gayatri Shenoy (11)
A-6/11 Flat No. 30
LIC Colony, Borivli (West)
Bombay 400013, India
Dancing, writing
India, Germany

7570 Amritha Mahesh (6) C 5 Alsa Deer Park 101 Velachery Road Madras 600032 Tamil Nadu, India Drawing, painting U.S.A., U.K.

7571 Ambika S. (13) 64 'Ambika' 1st 'A' Main, III Cross MICO Layout (BTM) Bangalore 560076 Karnataka, India Coins, reading Any country

7572
Arpita Ashat (12)
B-183 New Palam Vihar
Gurgaon, Haryana, India
Reading, playing
Any country

7573
P. Vasudha (14)
c/o Mr. P. Sivaji
Q.No. G-66, T.R.L.
Township, Belpahar
Orissa, India
Reading, singing
Australia, U.S.A.

7574
B.R. Samira (12)
d/o B. Ashok Kumar
Senior Geologist
Orient Cement, Devpur
Adilabad Dist. 504218
Andhra Pradesh, India
Stamps & coins, painting
Any country

7575
Parul Kapoor (13)
15 Pocket-AI Sector 3
Rohini, Delhi 110085, India
Drawing, singing
U.K., Canada

7576
Payal Chittora (13)
226/A Meera Marg
Meera Hotel, Saidarpura
Udaipur 313001
Rajasthan, India
Pen-friends, movies
Any country

GIRLS

7577
Febin N. (13)
TC 9/2202, Madrasa Lane
Sasthamangalam
P.O. Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala 695010, India
Making friends, music
Any country

7578
Maanasa Raghavan (10)
42/2 Inder Road
Dalanwala
Dehradun 248001
U.P., India
Badminton, reading
Other than India

7579
Arathi Gopinath (13)
Sadiyat Buildings
K.M. Road, (Opp.) Sastha
Temple
Aluva 683101, Kerala
India
Making friends, stamps
Any country

7580
Bonasera Pinto (14)
St. Joseph's Convent
Panchgani 412805
Maharashtra, India
Singing, dancing
Any country

7581 Candida Pinto (14) St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani 412805 Dist. Satara Maharashtra, India Dancing, singing Any country

7582 B. Priya (15) 7 A/61 W.E.A. Karol Bagh New Delhi 110005, India Reading, painting U.S.A., Japan

Meena (12) d/o Mr. Vijaya Kumar A-7, Matha Layout Udumalpet 642126 Coimbatore Tamil Nadu, India Painting, reading

7583

7585

Any country
7584
Sheetal Vij (16)
1683/3 Ramesh Bhavan
Nai Abadi, Khanna
Punjab, India
Music, stamps & coins
Any country

Mukhil Achuthan (10) 164 S.S. Pillai Street Tuticorin-1 Tamil Nadu, India Reading, painting Any country

7586 Shweta Lalan (10) 24/11 Old Rajinder Nagar New Delhi 110060, India Drawing, dance U.S.A., Japan

7587
Meghana S. (12)
3/D 701 Damodar Park
L.B.S. Marg
Ghatkopar (W)
Bombay 400086
Maharashtra, India
Swimming, reading

Hong Kong, Australia 7588 Jocelyn F. Fernandes (14) St. Joseph's Convent Panchgani Satara 412805 Maharashtra, India Music, dancing Any country 7589 Priyanka Bisht (14) c/o Mr. C.K. Bisht Rainbow Association D-1, F-7, Vashi New Bombay 400703 Maharashtra, India Reading, music Any country 7590

Shruti Dheep (7)
Dheep Clinic
10, Karapaga Nagar
K. Pudur
Madurai 625007
Tamil Nadu, India
Cancing, music
Japan, Pakistan

7591
Yangsom (16)
Shaba Junior High School
Class-VIII
P.O. Bonday
Bhutan
Music, travelling
Any country

7592 Sweta Arya (12) d/o Laxmi Narain Arya Near Khemka Sati Mandir Churu 331001, Rajasthan Reading Sanskrit India

BOYS

7605 7599 7593 Rishi Arora (13) Lakshmi Kant Pandey (12) Hitesh Pathak (12) S-254 Panchshila Park Pathak Bhawan P.O. Sunpura New Delhi 110017, India New Post, Churu Dist. Lohit 792111 Stamps, watching TV Rajasthan 331001, India Assam, India Cricket, football Badminton, stamps & coins Any country U.S.A., Japan U.S.A., Switzerland 7606 7594 7600 Amit Banerjee (13) Ashish Haldar (8) Bryan Fernandes (13) Ramakrishna Mission Ming Foll—Chinchinim 403 C. Pocket Il Vidyapith Mayur Vihar I Salcete, Goa 403715, India Vivekananda Nagar Delhi 110091. India Stamps, drawing P.O. Purulia 723147 Cricket, watching TV U.K., Germany West Bengal, India Any country Stamps, cycling 7601 Any country 7595 Narinder Singh (16) Kailash Chowdhary (12) 239/4 Shastri Nagar 7607 Kendriya Vidyalaya Meerut 250004 Sumit Sultania (14) Churu, Rajasthan 331001 U.P., India Ramakrishna Mission India Adventuring, collecting Vidyapith Cricket, reading old objects Vivekananda Nagar Korea Any country Purulia 723147 7596 7602 West Bengal, India Ashok Choudhary (15) Stamps, photography Kunal Dheep (11) c/o R. Choudhary 10, Karpaganagar Any country J.T.O. U.H.F. Station K. Pudur 7608 Near H.P.O., Churu Madurai 625007 Bishwa Ranjan Saha (12) Rajasthan 331001, India Tamil Nadu, India c/o S.P.M., Sub-Post Master Cricket, reading Stamps, swimming P.O. Delanipur Japan Zaire Andaman 744102, India 7597 7603 Stamps, making friends **Vijay** (13) Satish (13) Any country 77-E. Sector 4 S.K. Giri 7609 Pushp Vihar (Saket) Shukla Colony, Minoo Saif Islam (16) New Delhi 110017, India Ranchi, Bihar, India 60-A Pkt. 3 Stamps, reading Stamps & coins Mayur Vihar III France, India Any country Delhi 110096, India 7598 7604 Pen-friendship, speech J. Yuvraj (14) Gautam Dembla (13) writing s/o Mr. A. Jayachandran 28 Ashok Marg Any country 6 Bharathi Street Lucknow 226001 7610 Pondicherry-2, India U.P., India Rajan Rai (16) Stamps Stamps, wildlife Germany, Japan **Embassy of India House** Any country

BOYS

Thimphu, Bhutan Football, making friends Any country

7611
Master Prince (16)
s/o Parimal Kanti Roy
Subhaspally
Near Gondhya Math
P.O. Kharagpur 721301
Dist. Midnapore
West Bengal, India
Making friends,
photography
Any country

7612 Abhishek Joshi (16) 24-A/1 Mira Nagar Patiala 147001, Punjab Studying, cycling India

7613
Nitish Ejarder (14)
s/o Mr. Pulin Ejarder
Netaji Colony
Bhadrawati
P.O. Bhadrawati 442902
Dist. Chandrapur
Maharashtra, Indla
Bird watching, stone
collecting
Japan

7614
Master Aurojit Panda (9)
408 Hawa Singh Block
Asiad Village
New Delhi 110049, India
Stamps, reading
Any country

7615 Passang Miji (15) c/o Sri S. Miji Primary Health Centre P.O. Kalaktang Dist. West Kameng Arunachal Pradesh 790002 India Pen-friendship, gardening Bhutan, Japan

7616

Raj Bahadur Sonar (16) c/o Shri Mangal Bahadur Sonar P.H.C. Kalaktang P.O. Kalaktang Dist. West Kameng Arunachal Pradesh 790002 India Wrestling, cricket Japan, Bhutan

7617
Dhan Kumar Tamang (16)
c/o Principal
Govt. Hr. Sec. School
P.O. Kalaktang
Dist. Kameng
Arunachal Pradesh 790002
India
Kung-fu, cricket
Japan, Africa

7618
Vikas Chauhan (15)
House No. 10, Sector 7
Pocket - H-17, Rohini
Delhi 110085, India
Reading
Any country

7619
Sachin Kalani (14)
D-38, Rajouri Garden
New Delhi 110027, India
Computers
Any country

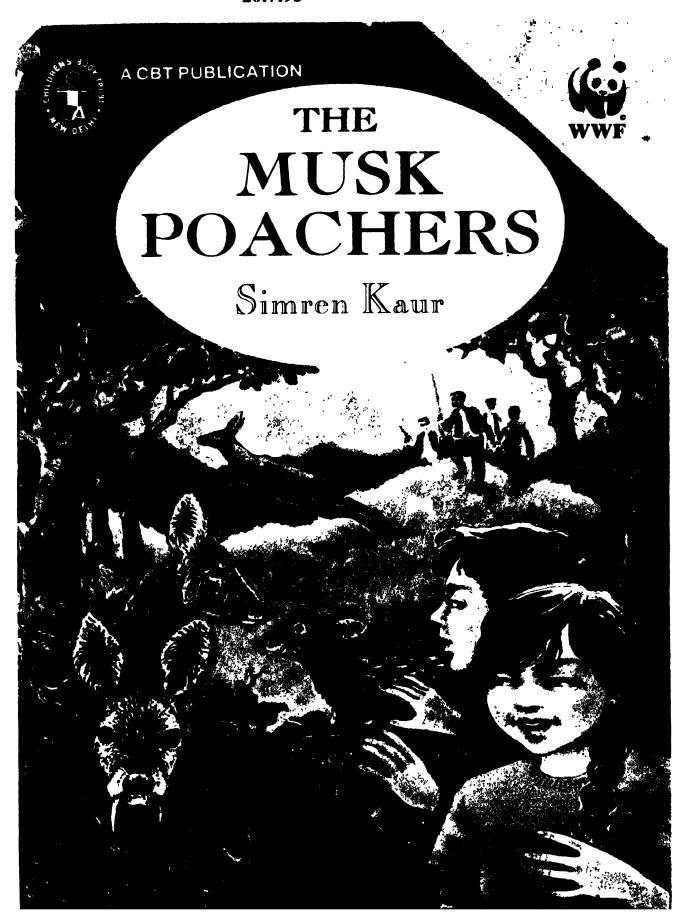
7620
A. Suresh (16)
H.No. 11-25-240/A
Kothawada, Warangal
Andhra Pradesh 506012
India
Stamps, cricket
Any country

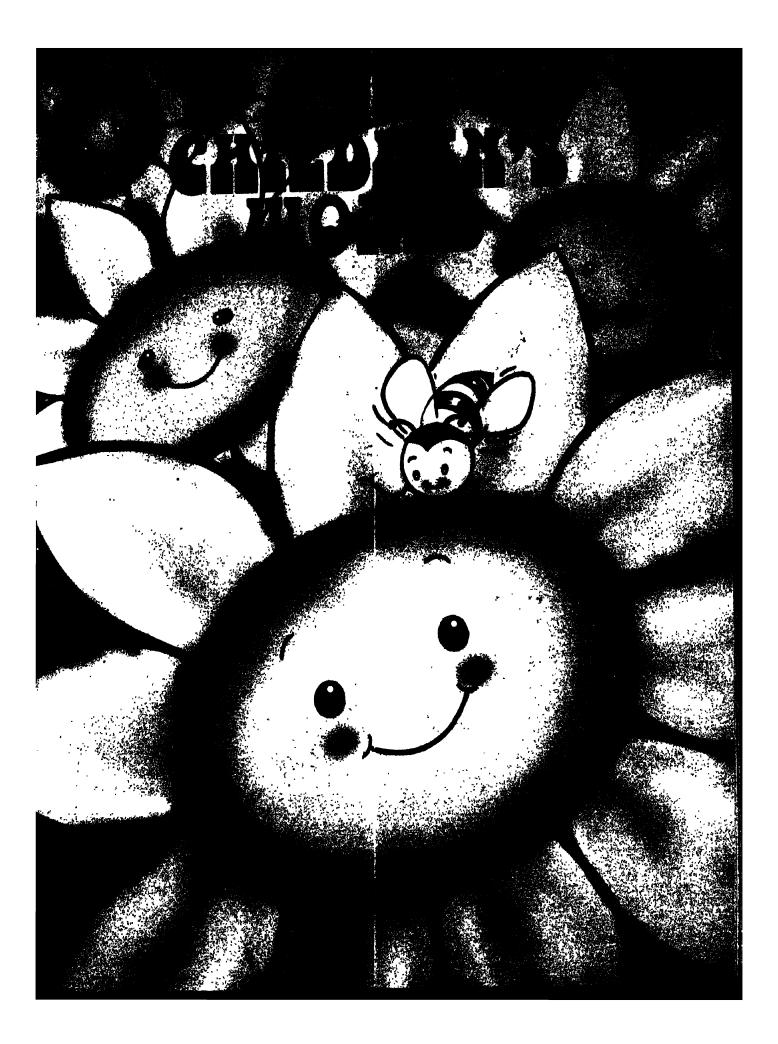
7621
Deepu S. Nair (14)
c/o Mr. M.R. Nair
'Gokulam'
Ayiroppara P.O.
Pothekode
Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala 695584, India
Painting
Any country

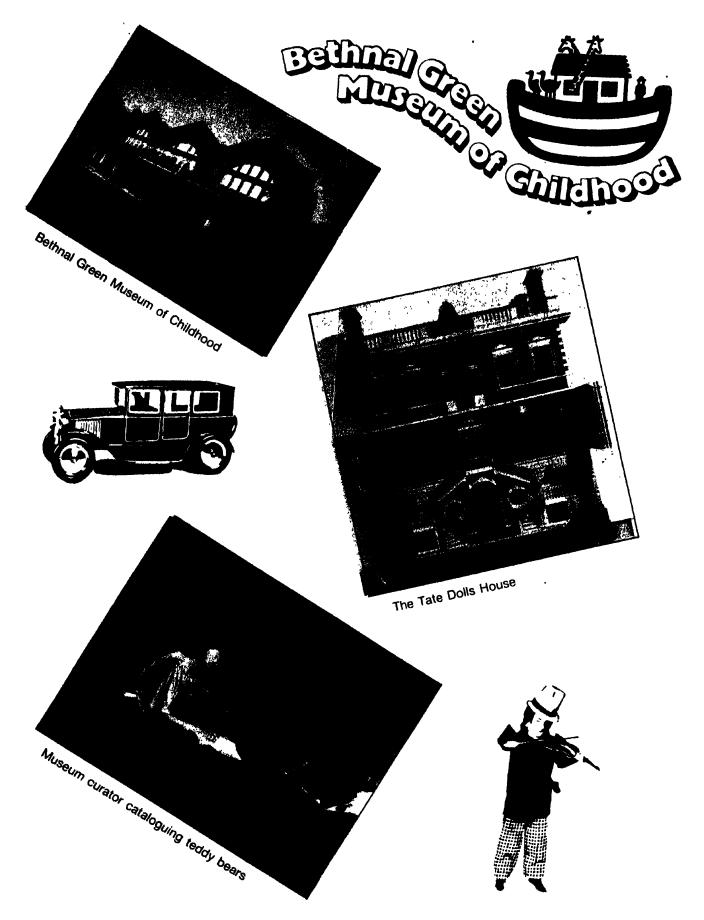
7622
Sunny (16)
B-3/26 C, Gasta Colony
Paschim Vihar 110063
New Delhi, India
Music, sports
Any country

7623
Sandeep Biswas (13)
HAL Township
P.O. Sunabeda-2
Dist. Koraput
Orissa 763002
Reading, watching TV
India

7624
Debasis Samant Roy
c/o Mr. S.N. Samant Roy
Qtr. No. G/69
At/P.O. H.A.L. Township
Sunabeda 763002
Dist. Koraput, Orissa, India
Reading, stamp collecting
Japan







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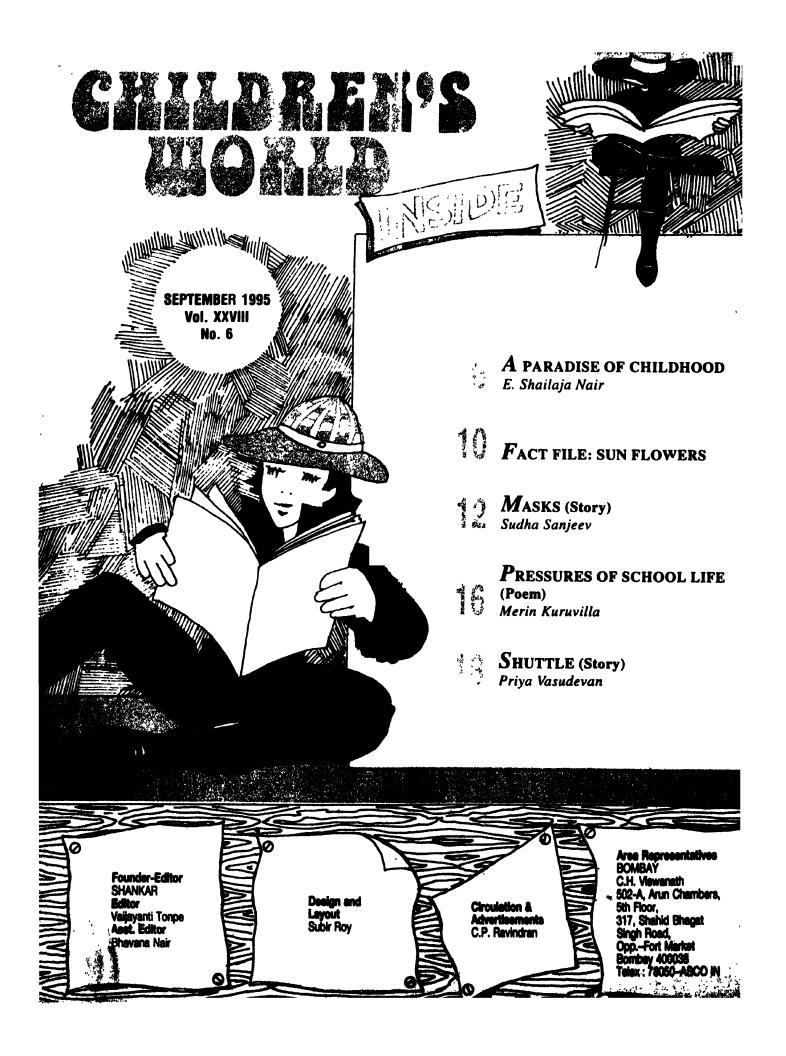
CHACHA CHAUDHARY RAAKA'S GAME

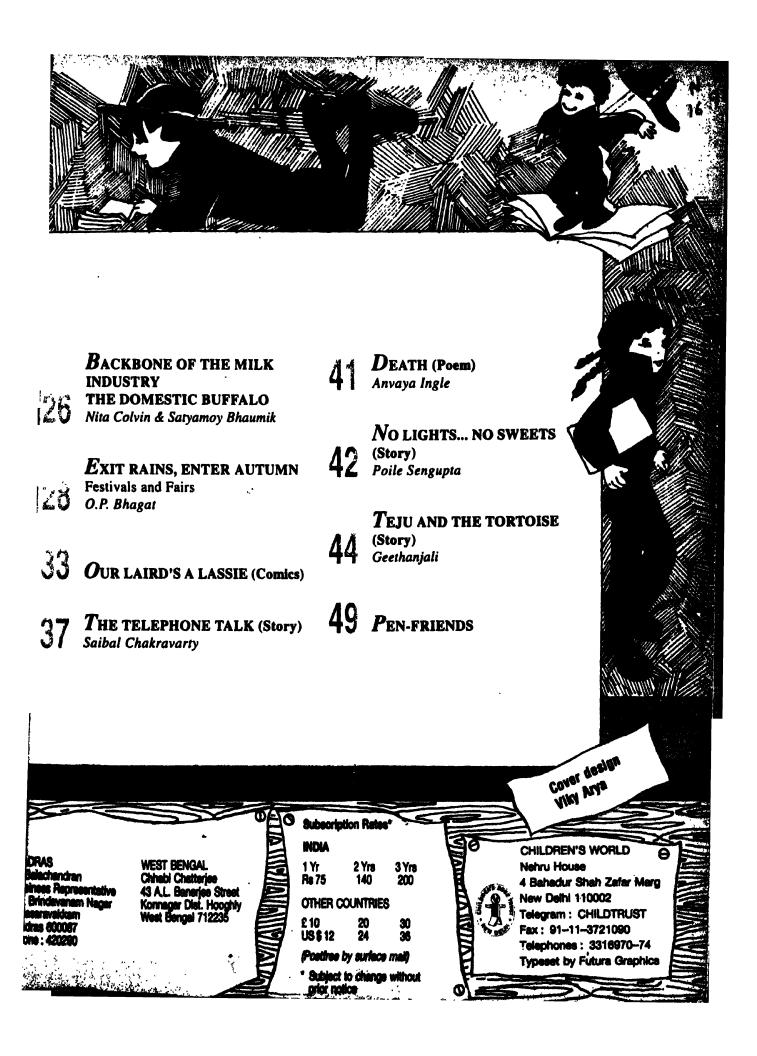
Barbarous RAAKA has returned. He has drunk the mireculous potion which has made the dreaded dacoit immortal. The brute stands as an upheaval task before sharp brain CHACHA CHAUDHARY and muscular SABU.

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... Dear Readers

I distinctly recall, as a child, desperately twisting and turning a tall stalk bearing two sunflowers growing almost back to back, so that both blooms could face the sun.

Of course I did not succeed. Not with that stalk, nor with several others that grew similarly. I didn't realise it then, perhaps, but Nature had just become my first teacher. There are no absolutes in Nature one realises. Only man-made notions. Also that you cannot fit life into neat little slots. Or for that matter people... whom as children, we are prone to putting on pedestals. What would school-life be worth if we could not admire, hero-worship, or have crushes on our teachers?

Till along comes this teacher (believe me, every class-topper and every class averager has this experience) whose favourite pastime seems to be to pick on you. Everything you do is either "too smart" or "too stupid", or you keep qualifying for a remark like, "Don't be a wiseguy."

Mercifully you grow up. And realise in your personal or professional life—how much that teacher contributed to the making of your personality. If you are extrapolite or nice as an adult—it could be because memories of being treated rudely, still rankle. If you are a high-achiever today, it is probably because an impatient teacher told you, you were "no good and will never achieve anything in life".

The rather obvious moral of the story being that every teacher teaches you something, helps shape your personality and that each one of us should permit them to do their teaching in their own inimitable style.

So will you be looking at your teachers with 'new' eyes this Teacher's Day on September 5? One cannot help but recall Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the second President of India, rather fondly on this occasion, since it is his birthday we celebrate as Teacher's Day.

Meanwhile, come September and it may be 'fall' time, elsewhere in the world. But here in India it is 'bloom' time. There are flowers everywhere—especially the very typical Indian ones. The delicate harsringar, the fragrant jasmine, the jaaswanti, amongst a horde of others... and Kerala seems to gather them all up in one great celebration of floral patterns for Onam...

Be a flower-child this month. Go back to Nature, see how many kinds of flowers you can gather, how many you can identify and write back to us about what Nature taught you....

Happy reading and flower picking...

Children's Book Trust mourns the passing away of its Chairman, Board of Trustees, Mr. G. Parthasarathy, on August 1, 1995, in New Delhi, at the age of 83.

A distinguished diplomat and foreign policy expert, Mr. Parthasarathy had begun his career with *The Hindu*, in Madras, as a journalist. He later went on to become the first Chief Editor of the Press Trust of India in 1950.

A brilliant academician, Mr. Parthasarathy was the first Vice-Chancellor of the premier institution—the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Mr. Parthasarathy was also the Chairman of Policy Planning Committee in the Ministry of External Affairs, and foreign policy advisor to the late Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, during the period 1980-85. Children's Book Trust benefitted greatly from his stewardship. As Chairman, he took a keen interest in the activities of the Trust. He loved children and the proper development of their creativity was dear to him. This led him to spearhead the activities of the Trust for children—admirably.

We at Children's Book Trust shall miss his able guidance in the years to come. May his soul rest in peace.



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HOAXES

Namatives of wits of clever & terrorising deeds of inscrie would give readers several moments of laughter



Text: E. Shailaja Nair Photographs on inside cover, courtesy: British Information Services Illustrations: Seema Pandey

ONDON—the very name conjures up images of a big city. Big offices, traffic jams and hundreds of people hurrying to work. Yes, London is all this, but in the midst of all the hustle and bustle there is a paradise of quiet charm, beauty and nostalgia. And this is the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, a huge brick building standing in its own garden with the name written in bright colours, the very name written like a flowing stream which is not going to be confined to any

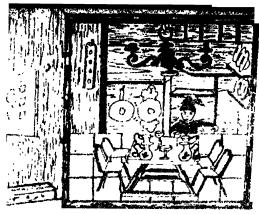


straight lines but is going any way it pleases, any manner it likes.

I entered the huge doors to step into a world of enchantment. On either side are huge dolls' houses behind glass cases. I just stood there, fascinated. I had never seen so many dolls' houses in so many different styles in one place before. There were houses in cabinets, houses made in the early



Victorian style, houses made for children, houses made by adults as a hobby and houses made for the royal family. The earliest known dolls' house does not exist except in documents. It was made for Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria in 1558. Though this was obviously not made for a child, the first dolls' houses for children were also made in Germany in the seventeenth century. An example of this is the Nuremberg house where the most fascinating room is the kitchen with its small pans and pewter



pots and an exquisite chandelier.

I wandered between the Dingley Hall made for two boys, Laurence and Isaac Curry, Dr. Bausch's Puppenstube made around 1900, Mrs. Gupta's house which made me feel as if I was back in India and the Lines brothers' house which was based on a real house, the "Y Bwthyn Bach" given to Queen Elizabeth II on her sixth birthday. The original is in the castle grounds of Windsor Castle. I felt as though I was in Toyland with all these houses and almost expected some of the dolls to come alive or maybe Noddy and Big Ears to come along in their little car.

Though the dolls' houses are undoubtedly the most fascinating part

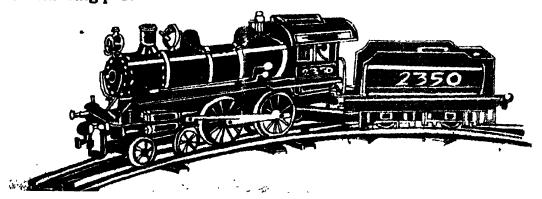
of the museum, the rest of it is no less interesting. As I went on to the floor where the model trains are laid out, I was thrilled to see the miniature of an old Indian train. It is a model of a saloon carriage of the North-western railway made for His Royal Highness Duke of Windsor during his Indian tour of 1921-22. It was presented to the royal visitor by the railway workmen at Lahore in February 1922.

I then wandered among the many dolls reflecting the styles of clothes as well as the technique of making dolls through the ages. I was lost to the world of real people till I heard the sound of a little girl saying, "I could have worn that dress." I looked around to see a little fiveyear-old girl looking at the dress supposed to have been worn by little girls in the eighteenth century. I looked at the heavily embroidered white gown and realised that what the girl said was true. The



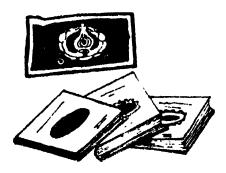
dress would look pretty on any child in any era. For children are not really different—whether then or now.

As I looked at the collection of stuffed toys and other well worn dolls, I remembered my own adored collection of dolls. How real they had been to me when I was a child. So I was not really surprised to see that a set of stuffed toys made for the Cattley family of children comprising a teddy called Tommy, an elephant called Pumpie, a mouse called Tittie and a baby bear called Baby Georgie, were treated by the Cattley children like real people. These animals had an extensive wardrobe, they were painted by the children and the pictures bound up into an album,



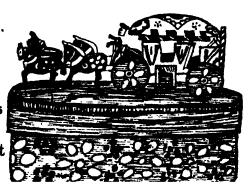
they were photographed on holidays, etc.

Then I came to a fascinating part of the museum, the Renier collection of books. Though the



whole collection is not on display, the ones that are, are thrilling. I was delighted to see the old and first editions of well loved books such as the Chalet School series by Elinor M. Brent-Dyer and the Malory Towers books by Enid Blyton as well as many others. The Reniers were a reclusive couple who seemed to have spent their time in just collecting books and also things like sweet cartons and board games though they had never had any children of their own. These were handed over to the museum in 1970.

As I reached the end of the museum, I looked back from the entrance, loth to leave such a place. I almost felt I was leaving a part of me and my



childhood back there. But then as Andrew Marvel wrote,

At my back I always hear Time's winged chariot hovering near.

So I resolutely turned my back on nostalgia and went on to rejoin the much less fascinating world of reality.

Mita Majumdar Illustrations: Seema Pandey

For me and you, and you and all, The world may be very small. But!

For me and you, and you and all, The world must be very tall, And!

For me and you, and you and all, The world is like a ball.

For me and you, and you and all,
There is a world's call
that is: "Love all! love all!"

But!

CHILDREN'S WORLD SEPTEMBER 1995

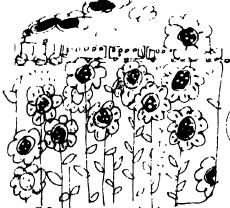


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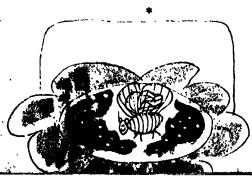
SPACT FILE SUNFLOWERS

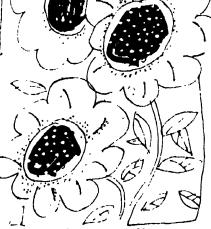


Often on a train journey you may chance to see fields upon fields of tall, bright yellow sunflowers, their laughing faces turned towards the sun. This cheery scene can leave as deep an impress on the mind as did the daffodils on William Wordsworth.

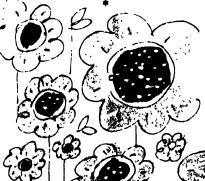


Vincent Van Gogh immortalised the sunflowers in a vase on the canvas.

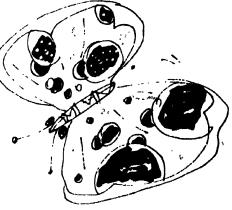




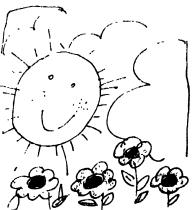
Sunflowers, tall, coarselooking plants, with large, rough leaves and huge, yellow heads of flower on stout, rough stems, are related to the little daisy.



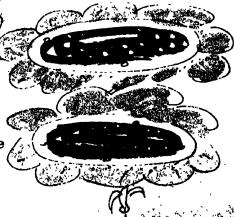
Believed to have originated in North America, there are more than 60 species of sunflowers. The common sunflower—



Helianthus annuus — grows wild in Peru, Chile and parts of North America.



Helianthus comes from the Greek words for 'sun' and 'flower'.





Ancient Peruvians worshipped the sun. They, therefore, used the sunflower in their religious ceremonies.



In India, the sunflower is cultivated. It finds use

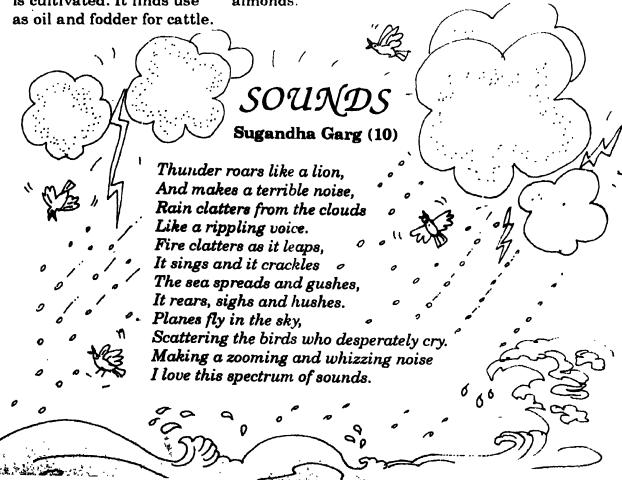
The seeds can be sown from January-February to June. Flowers can be seen in summer and the rainv season.



The seeds of the sunflower are flat. Rich in proteins, they can be peeled and eaten. They are said to taste like sweet almonds.



It is widely believed that the sunflowers always turn towards the sun, following its course from morn till eve. While the belief is not true. sunflowers have come to signify faithfulness in love.





Story: Sudha Sanjeev Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

E FLUNG his bag into a corner. There was a mutinous set to his jaw and shoulders. Rebellion and rage were evident in his expression, his gestures. Madhu looked at him from the dining table. Her heart sank. 'Oh, dear! Not again, she thought. Vivek, her son, had been having a rough time with one of his teachers. Realising that there was not much sense in asking him about it immediately, she walked to his room and said, "Vivek, come, lunch is ready. Megha's staying back in school for their LTS camp, so it's just the two of us ... You know, I met a very interesting

person today..."

She kept up the monologue while she guided him towards the washbasin where he mechanically washed his hands

d face. Passing him the el, she gave him a hug. How he had ! Time was when he rest his head on her

shoulder...now she could barely reach his shoulder.

Lunch over, Vivek leaned back in his chair. Some of the tension had left his face. "Thanks, Amma," Vivek leaned forward and squeezed his mother's hand.

Madhu smiled, "Anytime, son." She knew that he knew. He was far too bright not to see through her tactics. "Want to talk about it?" she asked.

And then it poured forth...how Pathak Sir, his teacher, constantly picked on him; how Sir refused to answer his questions or discuss something, how when he argued with Pathak Sir about a point that he knew was right, his teacher had sarcastically resorted to his standard answer, "You think you know everything... you think you are so wise just because you've won a few quizzes"; how Sir had ridiculed him by saying that though his name was 'Vivek', he hardly showed any wisdom or intelligence; how he had begun to hate his favourite subject because of that "stupid" teacher...

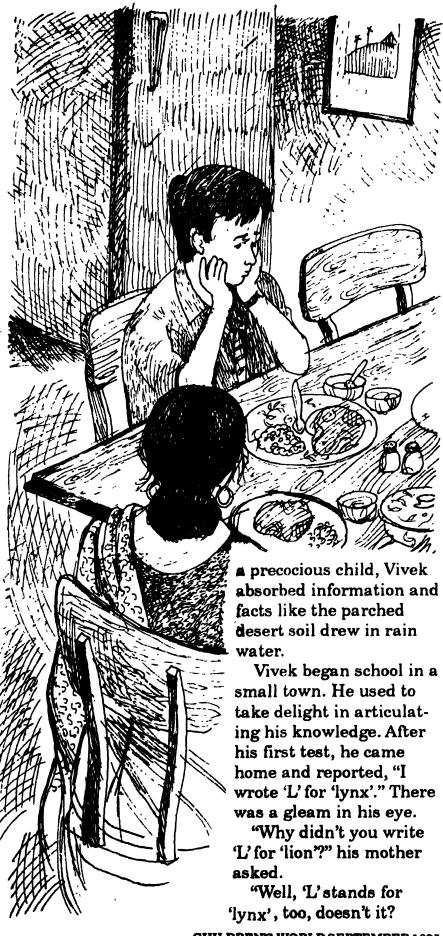
"Hush! Don't call your teacher 'stupid'," Madhu said automatically, trying to stem the outburst.

"He is, he is! He doesn't know his subject well. And when he's pushed against the wall, he lashes out with personal comments that hurt so much. What does my performance in a quiz contest have to do with his subject? Tell me, Amma, is he right?"

Madhu was stumped. She looked at Vivek, speechless. He waited for a little while and then walked away, violence and vehemence obvious. She heard music reverberating from his room. Perhaps that would give him the solace he needed.

Madhu knew she had a problem. And it wasn't a new one. Through Vivek's years in school, every once in a while, this problem would surface in varying degrees of intensity. Being

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Right?" he asked stubbornly, seeds of mutiny visible even then.

"Yes, it does, son," she sighed with a vague sense of unease.

Sure enough, the teacher asked him to conform to the text.

As the years passed and as Vivek climbed up the school ladder, similar incidents kept popping up. Madhu tried to explain to her son that few teachers would like to be challenged and proved wrong, that too in front of other children, but Vivek was not convinced. Black is black and white is white.

"If I make a mistake, would she not correct me?"

"Didn't you teach me to be honest?"

"Would you find it difficult to accept your mistake, Amma ..."

Madhu decided to talk to Vivek's class teacher. Miss Parekh. Vivek liked her. Madhu remembered how once Vivek had piped up in Miss Parekh's class and told her that the word 'dinosaur' was pronounced dainosaur and not as she was saying it. Miss Parekh promised to check it up. The next day, in front of the whole class, Miss Parekh had acknowledged her mistake and praised Vivek. That had floored Vivek completely.

"Vivek, will you help me make the masks for the workshop? Come to the Activities room, please," said Miss Parekh in her gentle manner. He nodded and followed her. They sat down to paint the animal masks.

Vivek was good at painting, good with his hands. He loved working with Miss Parekh. He finished the tiger's mask, put it on and roared menacingly.

"Ferocious, aren't you?"
Miss Parekh smiled. She
put down her brush and
looked at him. "Vivek, we
all wear masks—though
there is no paint on them."

Vivek looked at her searchingly. "We do?" He thought for a while, "Do you, Miss Parekh?"

"Sometimes, I do too.
Does it surprise you,
Vivek? We have different
roles in life. You know me
as a teacher. I teach, I
request, I direct, I
organise, I permit, I
command. But at home I
am the youngest in the
family. I learn things from
my mother. I am given
directions and ordered
about and if I want to go
somewhere, I too have to
ask permission."

Do you?" Vivek heard himself repeating his

question. "But what do you really mean?"

"I mean, all around, you see different people behaving in different ways fitting into the roles that they take on. But don't forget that they are human too. Each person has his limitations—some more than others—whether he is a teacher or a student."

Vivek struggled to understand Miss Parekh's words. Why was she saying this to him? Could she be talking about Sir? Had she heard?

"You're referring to Sir, aren't you, ma'am?" Vivek asked.

Something flickered across Miss Parekh's face. She picked up a new mask to paint.

"Tell me, ma'am. Would you react in the same way? Would you hurt someone deliberately?" Vivek asked, getting worked up.

"No, I wouldn't." Miss
Parekh raised her hand to
stop Vivek's words. "Listen. What I'm trying to
say is that don't attempt
to put people in slots and
expect them to behave in
the same way; or on
pedestals and expect them
not to fall. Can you be
absolutely sure that all
the students in your

class—boys who have grown up with you—will react in the same way to a given situation?"

"I guess, I can't."

"In which case, you can't expect teachers to, either, can you? Fortunately, most teachers are balanced and caring. After all, you are with each teacher for a year or two. Once you know what a teacher is like, it is easy to behave accordingly, isn't it? You know, Vivek, honesty is very essential, but to be diplomatic is equally so."

"You mean, there are no real life heroes, no role models?" Vivek asked.

"Certainly not the Tarzan or He-man types--who are heroic every day of their lives. But yes, even the most ordinary people can be extraordinarily heroic when the need arises," said Miss Parekh.

Vivek mulled over what Miss Parekh had said.

"Here's a mask—just for you, Vivek!"

"For me?"

"Yes," Miss Parekh laughingly tweaked Vivek's ear. "It's a mask of the wise old man of China. It reflects your mood now. You look just like him."

Vivek smiled and put on the mask.



One day a child asked his parents: "Who are the Parents of parents and so on and..."

The parents thought for a while and replied: "Nature."

We might have heard of Nature. But have never seriously thought that the entire animal world and the world of vegetation are dependant on Nature.

Let us save Nature—Let us protect the Environment.

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Pressures School Life

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (11) Illustrations: Seema Pandey

Homework, assignments, reports galore Pages of notes and tests by the score The amount of slogging to be done, it's so

And these are just a few pains of school.

All I can do in History is snore

'Cos everyone knows it is so much of a bore

The teacher drones on and on in the

Physics class

About facts of energy, heat, temperature

About facts of energy, heat, temperature and mass

The endless sums in Algebra nearly drive me insane

And I almost have a breakdown under all that strain



The examinations are something I always
dread
With knowledge all jumbled floating in my

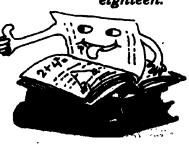
The only periods I enjoy are those in which we are free

They are the only ones which appeal to me Plus, naturally I have a snooze and all Playing on the computers and chatting in the hall

Occasionally I take a look at the bright side, largely unseen I don't have to undergo all this after I am eighteen.

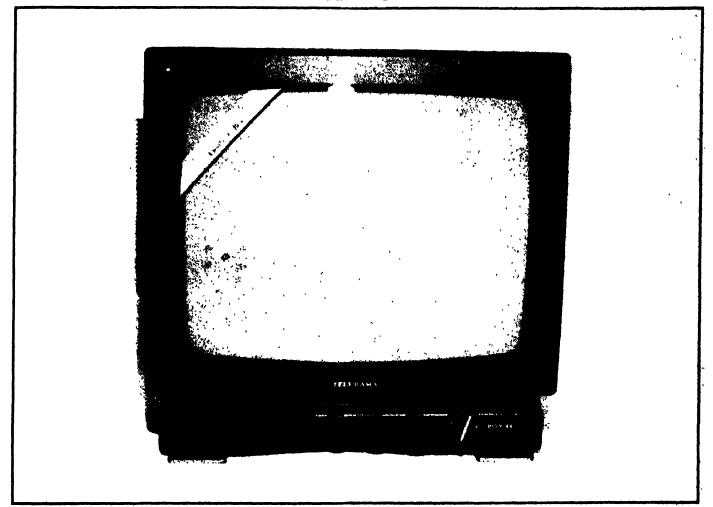






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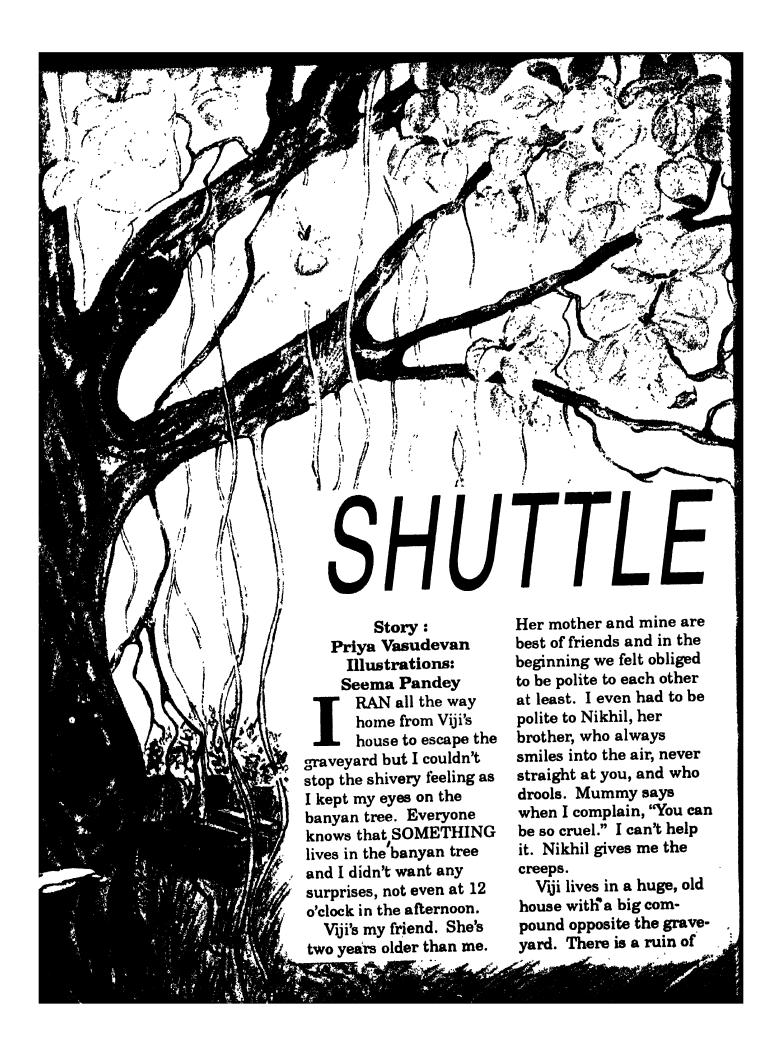
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an outhouse in the compound. In the old days, before Viji's father died. the servants used to live in it. Since her father's death, they have not been able to maintain it. The roof fell off in the huge hailstorm we had a few years back, but Viji's people never bothered putting it back on, so we kids use it as a playhouse. There's a mango tree growing near a window, so all we have to do is climb it and get in. We could use the front door key of course, but why bother, when the tree's there.

Actually, I really began to like Viji when I found out she didn't mind that I'm only nine nearly ten—and that she told the most brilliant ghost stories. She had just told me one about a ghost which ate up hearts, livers and kidneys, which was why I was running home.

Home is not far from Viji's house. You just turn right down one street and left up another, run through the graveyard and you land up bang in front of Viji's. If, like me, you want to avoid the graveyard, then you have to run all the way round it, down two more streets. That's what I did and I

ended up late for lunch, just when I particularly wanted Mamma in a good mood so that she would let me go with Neena to her club for some shuttle practice. I knew what she would say, "You don't know how to play it and vou don't have an allwhite outfit." But I had my answer all ready. I would say, "Mamma, Neena's going to teach me and I can wear my white jeans and school sports shirt," and she would run out of excuses and wouldn't be able to say no.

I needn't have worried.
Mamma had gone out. I
went to Prasad Aunty's
house for the key. Her
son, Amit, was there so I
didn't go inside. Amit is in
Engineering College and
he likes to tickle me. I
don't like being tickled, it
makes me feel funny...
strange.

Neena said she would pick me up at 2.30 at the colony gate so I had to rush through lunch.

There were chapatis and salad for lunch. I finished off the lot (saved time putting it away), changed and ran down the steps.

That Dariush was sitting on the landing with Sohrab. He put out a leg just as I ran down. I didn't let on that I had seen it

until I side-stepped it. I didn't bother to even glance at him but ran on down. Just made it to the car with a minute to spare.

Neena is my best friend. She is in the same class as me. She was new last term, but we just clicked rightaway. She lives in the big house next to our colony. In fact, I can see her bedroom from mine. Sometimes we send signals to each other from our rooms. We have a secret system; you can call it our own code. Neena worked it out. She's good at languages. We have a daytime system and a night-time one. I love the night-time one—switching off and switching on lights and all. It gives me a lovely feeling to know that only one other person in the whole world knows the signal. Other than me, that is.

This was our first meeting of the day; so we had quite a bit to talk about in the car. We talked mostly about the play our class was doing for Teacher's Day. Actually we were doing two plays. You see, we couldn't make up our minds which play to choose. I wanted to do 'Macbeth'. I got the idea

from Little Women; it sounded just like the Christmas play in that, the witch and all. I thought we could just read out the difficult bits from Lamb's Tales and do the exciting ones like the witches' bubbling cauldron and Banquo's ghost and all.

Every time I thought of my play I felt a nice warm glow in my stomach—it was going to be great! I told Mamma about it; she just raised her eyebrows and said, "Don't you think that's a bit ambitious? I think Neena's play sounds like a good idea."

Mamma thinks Neena is the cat's whiskers. Just because Neena has stayed in London and New Jersey and can fly all by herself abroad, she thinks she can do everything right.

Whenever Mamma puts on her 'I love Neena' look, I just tell her, "Fine, you send me along abroad and see if I don't come back the same." It is a good thing Neena is my best friend or I would be very, very jealous.

Anyway, I told Mamma that I thought it was a great play and it would come out really well on stage. So when Neena and I couldn't agree (we almost fought over it) on the play, I had one of my really brilliant ideas. We would meet the Princie and get permission to do both plays. Now all we had to do was decide which play to do first and we were ready.

Neena won because 'Macbeth' had all those reading bits which wouldn't do for the first play. The Princie didn't mind and we decided to get Miss Rose a rose (get it?) as our class-present. The class didn't really mind, our choosing the play. Neena was the class rep, and anyway I had always chosen the class play before. Teacher's Day was only a week away and we still had to decide the costumes for 'Macbeth'. Which was why we were talking about the plays in the car.



My parents are not members of Neena's club. Mamma and Dad don't go out much, except to office parties. Mamma reads a lot and Dad watches Prime Sports. I den't watch TV much. Mamma says it is because I'm too imaginative. Right after that, in case I think it is a compliment, she always says, "Be more practical, Chinks, like Neena."

We got down from the car. I forgot to push up the window and doublelock the door. Neena sighed, "Oh never mind", so I just shut it again. As we walked towards the club. Neena said urgently. "Hey, Chinks, I think your shirt is torn under your left arm—and your trousers, didn't you iron them?" My sneakers were none too clean either and I was glad she hadn't noticed. "You had better not play, someone might see. Do you want to watch or will you sit in the library?"

"I'll watch," I sighed.
There was another
person sitting on the
bench — a boy. He looked
older than me. He smiled
as I sat down, not a smirk
but a smile, so I smiled

back. **
"Hi! Not playing?" he

asked.

"No, I don't know how," I said.

"Can't the other girl, your friend, teach you?"

"She isn't very good at teaching," I lied desperately. Then to change the subject, I asked, "What's your name?"

"Ashok, what's yours?"
"Chinks," I said.

"Chinks? You mean they really named you that? Isn't that racist?"

"Racist? What's that?
Never heard the word
before." Mamma and
Daddy couldn't be that,
whatever it was. Just
then the boy's friend came
up to him so he got up to
play and I never got
another chance to ask him
what he meant.

I did not tell Mamma about Ashok. I just looked up 'racist' in my Oxford School Dictionary. I knew they called me Chinks because of my eyes which slant and my nose which is flat. I asked Mamma instead, "Ma, whom do I look like?"

"Darling, you look like your Ajji, your father's mother. Why, did someone say something?" she asked.

"No, I just wanted to know. You know, I thought maybe I was adopted and that's why I don't look like you or Dad." "No, baby, look here's your hospital photo, as soon as you were born. See and your birth certificate. Is that O.K.?"

Mamma has a big album full of my photos and a little snipping of my hair in a plastic bag and all. I gave her a kiss. Sometimes I love my mother a lot.

That was when I decided to change my name to Romilla. I announced it at breakfast next morning. So when Dad left he said, "See you, Romilla," and smiled at Mamma.

I wasn't too happy about the way the last practice went. The witch didn't act witchy and I couldn't do her because I was Macbeth and the narrator. Anyway, we fixed the costumes and set up the scenery after the class, in our class-room. We didn't have any classes the next day because it was Teacher's Day.

I had to leave early because Dad was picking me up on his scooter, and he had said, "Five sharp, mind!" after breakfast.

Mad Martha was sitting under the tamarind tree near the old building.

Neena's car usually picked her up on the other side of the school and since we went home together, I

don't have to pass Martha at all. Just my luck that I had to pass her that day. Martha—she dresses in rags and tries to catch each kid running past. They said she ate kids. She made a grab at me and cackled. She was tearing some rags into strips.

Dad was waiting for menear the gate. He said, "What happened?"

"It's only Mad Martha," Dad. She tried to get me."

"You mean your school allows a mad woman inside. I am going to write a stinker to the Principal," he said. Dad had really done it now. The Princie would be mad at me and maybe I would fail and be 'kept back' in



class like Rita, who had already failed twice.

"Dad, she's not mad, really she's just a harmless creature, old and poor. She doesn't do anything, honest," I pleaded.

Dad merely said "Get on the scooter." he didn't take me home straight away. He didn't say anything but I found out because we were going in exactly the opposite direction. He stopped at the Taj, which is my favourite hotel. Not the grand one where I was always worried I was going to do something awful like getting a lapful of soup, but the Udu, one.

"Yay masat dosar" I yelled.

Dad frowned at me but he was smiling, really.

After I had my masal dosai and he was having his second cup of coffee, he said, "Chinks, how would you like to stay in Madras?"

"Madras! I like it right here. Besides it's hot. hotter, hottest there, no thanks."

"There are a lot of good schools there, you could learn dancing, singing, anything you want."

I cited a nswer, just looked at him. He wasn't just in ting; this was getting serious. "Why?" I demanded.

"I've been offered a promotion but I'll have to go to the regional office at Madras. We can't afford to keep two houses running. I have no choice, actually. We'll have to go."

I wished we weren't in a hotel. I wished I could get up and run to my room. I didn't want to hear this. But I had to know the answer to the next question

"When? I whispered.

"I'm leaving next month and you and Mamma will follow in December, after your school closes. I'll have to pull a few strings to get you into a new school in the middle of the year, but my company say they will help."

I followed him dumbly out of the hotel. Moving, when I knew everyone in the neighbourhood and had such good friends. At my age, making new friends was an awful experience. Gosh, what would Neena and Viji say! But not tonight. I wasn't going to call them tonight. I had to go to my room. I had to read a book. I didn't even want to think about it. Not till after the play, anyway.

I knew it was going to be a bad day when I saw

the sky. It was gray and gloomy. I always feel better when the sun shines. I was right. As soon as I reached school. Neena broke the awful news. Kalpana, who was to play the witch, was sick. There was no time to get another. We had put in only one. She had sent word through Mallika. Oh! I would have loved to make her really sick, the wretched pest. Now I would have to read out the witch's part and the play was ruined!

I watched glumly as
Neena's play went off
brilliantly. 'Macbeth' was
going to be horrible and I
had asked the Princie
special permission for
nothing! I wished we could
call it off but it was too
late. The audience was
waiting and all the other
girls wanted to play their
parts.

Neena came running up. "Let me help," she offered.

"No thanks!" I snarled. The awful, gloating creature. I didn't want her help, thanks very much!

There was nothing I could do to put some life into 'Macbeth'. I mean, what can anyone do, when so many scenes are missing! I had to read on and on and somehow, I

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had lost heart. My voice sounded squeaky to me, so it was no wonder a few people yawned. That's what it was, one big yawn!

Then something worse happened. Neena stepped up to give Miss Rose the rose and the stalk bent a bit. Miss Rose thanked us and then she said, "You children shouldn't have had two plays, you know. One was quite enough. And when you gave the flower you should have put it in a glass of water or something. Remember next time, children."

Cross old thing! We really shouldn't have bothered! Somehow, it seemed just the sort of thing to happen that day.

We didn't speak much on the way home but when she dropped me off, Neena said, "I don't think I'll ever call Miss Rose nice again. But Chinks, I told you that 'Macbeth' wouldn't work out. It's too tough. Forget it. Anyway, it's over."

That did it. "Neena Mehra, I'll never talk to you as long as I live. 'Macbeth' is not too tough. It's not my fault that creature Kalpana didn't turn up. I hate you!" I flung open the car door and ran through the gate.



Mamma didn't say anything until she came to bid me goodnight. I had picked at my dinner and stayed in my room all day. Dad hadn't yet reached home. "Had a bad day?"

"Kalpana didn't turn up and the play was awful, and I've fought with Neena. Oh, Mamma!" I blubbered.

She stroked my head,
"There are some people
who take life the hard
way. They try to do
impossible things. Sometimes they do succeed,
sometimes not. The rest
of us take the easy way,
doing whatever we know
we can achieve. You tried,
knowing you could lose. If

it had come off, it would have been wonderful. I'm happy that you made the attempt. That's brove. Have you told Neena about the move?" I shook my head.

"I thought not. Sometimes it's hard for those who are near you to understand why you always have to reach for the top. Don't blame her. She only told you what she thought. She didn't see how much you were hurting. You'll never forgive yourself if you don't make up before we leave. Think about it." She kissed me and left.

I knew Mamma was right, but somehow I



couldn't make up with Neena. She should have understood how I was feeling. I spent more time at Viji's house. Viji never minded my being there. If she was busy, I usually read her grandfather's books. He had lovely ones. I loved reading The Moonstone and Rob Roy and The Scarlet Pimpernel. All his books had pictures too.

I told Viji I was going, of course. "Where's your autograph book?" she asked me.

Nikhil and I had become quite friendly now. He still smiled into the air, but I didn't mind. It was just the way he was. I still thin round the graveyard, though. I could never get used to that. I walked home now everyday with Viji going half the way with me. We always took the back-gate route, so we always saw Mad Martha. I got used to her too.

Dad said he would pick me up on his last day at home so I ran the last lap. I almost didn't notice, but even as I ran I could feel something was wrong. Martha, Martha didn't grab at me. I stopped and looked back. Nothing. She was just lying there. Then it hit me—Martha never slept. Not all the time I had known her. I had to get close. Suppose she was pretending and

she really caught me? I took my ruler from my bag. I felt my hivery feeling come on but I couldn't run away. I couldn't. I stood as far back as I could and leaned over.

"Martha," I poked at her.

Martha lay with her face turned the other side. I poked her again. Nothing. Maybe she had fainted. I had to get help. Dad would understand.

When Sister Mary-Anne saw Martha, she said, "Child, did you touch her?"

"No, Sister," I said.

"Come away. There's nothing anyone can do for her. She's dead. God rest her soul. You go on home.

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It's getting late."

I had to ask, though my knees were knocking at my own boldness, "Did she die because she ate children?"

Sister Mary-Anne looked shocked. "Where did you get such an idea? Eat children, indeed! She died of old age. Do you think we would have allowed such a dangerous creature in the school? Silly girl!"

Dad took me straight home this time. He could see from my face that the last thing on my mind was food. I didn't eat anything that day.

It was a good thing Dad left on a weekend so I didn't have to talk to anybody. On Sunday afternoon I went to Viji's.

Nikhil met me. "Viji go," he said.

I asked, foolishly, so of course, he just stared at me.

He was standing on the steps, swaying a little on his heels. Suddenly, he smiled and began to run on the road.

"Hey, Nikhil," I called. I had to go after him. He could get run over or something.

I began running too.
Then Nikhil really threw
me. He smiled over his
shoulder — really smiled
at me, not into the air,
and, waving cheerily, ran
straight into the

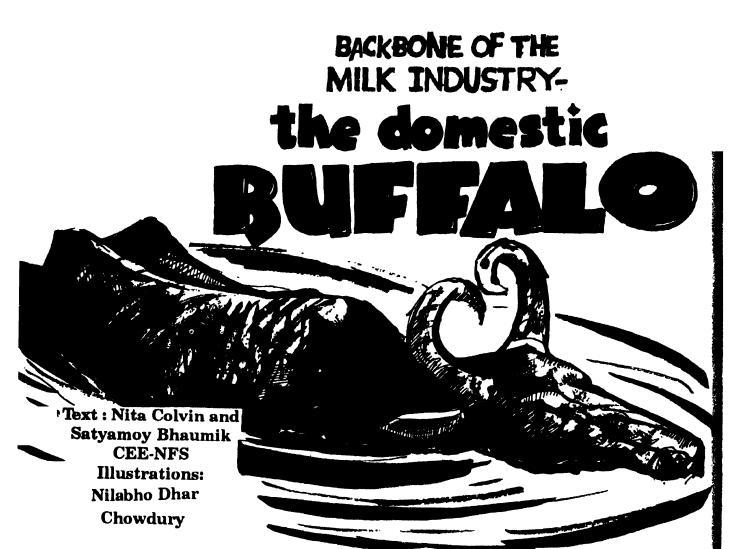
graveyard.

I stopped. Let him run. I was not going in, no way. He was past the banyan tree, now. The sun was bright over the headstones. Nikhil stopped and began to sway again, stretching out his arms and folding them, folding, stretching, his eyes screwed up because of the sun.

My legs carried me right upto him. I didn't even know it but I was there, standing beside him, past the banyan tree. Nikhil began to laugh. He grabbed my hand and took me, running, among the headstones.

I let the sun warm me. Tomorrow I would speak to Neena. Today I would laugh in the sun with this laughing boy — in, out, in, out, chasing away the ghosts, laughing.





pond on the outskirts of a village, ruminating cud with eyes half closed, they are an integral part of the village scene. If not immersed in water, domestic buffaloes may be seen working on small farms or drawing carts full of fodder for the farmer.

In India, the domestic buffalo, Bubalus arnee, or bhains as it is called in Hindi, is a descendant of the wild species Bubalus bubalus. A massive black creature, the domestic

bovine does not differ much from the wild one. Inheriting the courageous strain of its wild ancestor, it can even confront lions and tigers. If provoked, tame buffaloes can prove quite dangerous.

Docile animals

Despite their intimidating appearance, buffaloes are gentle animals. With familiar people they are docile and serene. Allowing children to wash them down or ride on their back, they behave almost like household pets.

Buffaloes are less

tolerant to heat than cows and therefore inhabit places where there is ready access to water. Their skin has only onesixth the density of sweat glands that cow skin has, and so they do not lose much heat by sweating. Living in humid areas, they are unable to cool off by sweating and hence the need to get into water. Buffaloes prefer wallowing in water to standing in the shade of trees. When humidity is high, buffaloes may wallow for nearly five hours a day. Wallowing not only cools them, it

safeguards them from many skin diseases. When immersed in puddles, their bodies get caked with mud. The mud-coated skin resists insects and ticks, making them less prone to diseases transmitted by skin parasites.

Buffaloes feed on swamps, vegetation, coarse grasses, or on crop residues. Like true ruminants, they chew food for a considerably long time. The food consumed remains for a longer period in the rumen (stomach) and hence gets digested better. Buffaloes can extract nourishment from forage that other cattle find too poor to survive on.

Slow breeders

Buffaloes are considered slow breeders but that is because they are usually undernourished. Generally buffaloes produce three to four calves in five years but some may give birth to a calf every year. The gestation period is ten months, one month longer than in cows. The newborn calf weighs about 33 to 40 kilograms, and as buffalo milk is rich in fat content, the calves grow very quickly.

Buffaloes make up about 33 per cent of the country's milch animals

excluding goats, but produce nearly 70 per cer of its milk. Yielding almost thrice as much as cows, buffaloes have come to occupy an important place in the dairy industry in India. Consequently, nearly 50 per cent of the world's buffaloes are found in our country. Some of the finest buffalo breeds raised in India include Murrah, Nili/Ravi, Surti, Mehsana, Nagpuri, and Jafarabadi.

The Anand Co-operative in Gujarat which daily contributes thousands of gallons of milk to Operation Flood, involves more than 1,50,000 Surti buffaloes.

Buffalo milk contains less water, more solid-fats, lactose, and protein than cow's milk. The richness of buffalo milk makes it highly suitable for processing into butter, ghee, cheese and khoya.

Living tractors

In India, buffaloes contribute to farm power in the rice fields. As their legs can withstand continual wet conditions better than mules or oxen, they are used to plough inundated paddy fields. They can easily plough through the deep mud that would bog down a tractor. Sometimes they



are made to draw carts of fodder or agricultural produce on village roads that are unfit for trucks. Though sturdy, they are not very successful as draught animals since they are extremely slow workers. Their need to wallow every two hours or so is also an impediment.

Lack of cattle management and proper nutrition in India has led to high mortality, low pregnancy rates, and low milk yields among the buffalo. Livestock in India is a neglected lot. If their condition is to be improved and their health ameliorated, it is imperative that grazing grounds be developed for them. Concerted efforts on the part of researchers, planners, and development agencies will help better the living conditions of these animals which constitute a significant source of income and productivity in India.



Text: O.P. Bhagat Illustrations: Subir Roy

EPTEMBER is the last of the monsoon months. But more than that, it is a moody month.

It may rain off and on, or it may rain for days together or there may be a long, dry spell. Then the sun is as strong as in May and June.

Sometimes it is pleasantly cool. But at other times there is no wind. Then it is hot and humid, and you feel uneasy.

Towards the end of the month it is often cool and clear. It seems the monsoon is over and gone. But, unexpectedly, it rains, and it rains heavily, for several days.

Heavy rain does more harm than good. It is the monsoon's parting kick.

In Kerala, where the rains come first, it is already a cool and cloud-less autumn. The people

hail it by celebrating the festival of Onam.

In fact, autumn is festival time all over India. But north of Kerala the season comes later. So the festival season there also begins later.

A word about autumn. In the cold countries it is the time of falling leaves. (The Americans aptly call it fall.) But the Indian autumn is leafy and green.

This is because before autumn we have a long. rainy season. Rain gives a new life or thrust to all living things. The plants and trees do not just grow—they thrive.

Even after the rains end, there is a lot of water in the soil. It keeps the trees and shrubs green. Some of our trees flower only in autumn. Alstonia and Harsinghar, for example.

Some weeds do die out, after September or October. But they are seasonal. They come up with the monsoon and go with it.

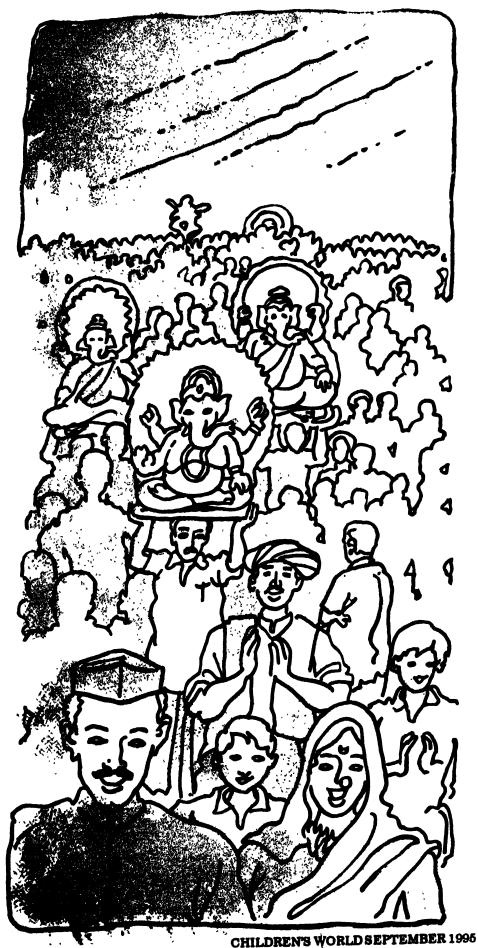
In Kashmir and other parts of the Himalayas, the autumn is as in Europe and America. There the tree leaves turn yellow and russet and fall.

From Kerala to
Kashmir the climate
varies. So does the landscape. Each State or
region is beautiful in its
own way.

But before Onam, we shall take up Ganesha Chaturthi. Usually the festival comes off in September. This year it falls on August 29.

Chaturthi in the name refers to the fourth day of the bright fortnight of Bhadon (Bhadrapad). It is thus a monsoon festival.

Ganesha looks different from most other Hindu



gods. He has the head of an elephant and the body, with a pot belly, of a man. To others he may seem odd, but not so to his devotees.

His belly does seem amusing. But more than that it indicates his love of things, sweets in particular. It also suggests plenty or prosperity.

Indeed, Ganesha is a most auspicious god. One of his other names is Vighneshwara. It means remover of obstacles. For that reason he is worshipped at the start of any venture or ceremony.

Ganesha has worshipers all over India. But in Maharashtra this festival is celebrated with great fervour.

In 1892 Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak gave it a new meaning. To unite the people, he called for community celebrations.

As he is a family favourite, Ganesha is worshipped in every home. At the same time, the people come together to worship him at many places.

In Pune the festival is an occasion to remember. Famous singers, dancers and musicians perform there. The event is a big tourist draw.

After one and a half or five or seven or ten days of

worship, the clay images of the god are taken to a river or the sea, with thousands of followers chanting and dancing. The images are then immersed in the water.

On Chaturthi night the devotees do not look at the moon. There is an interesting story behind it.

One day Ganesha was going on his mount. Do you know what his mount is? A rat. Again something odd. But the devout do not question it.

On the way the god slipped off his mount. At this the moon laughed. Ganesha did not like that. He cursed the moon. saving that whoever looked at it would be in for bad luck.

The moon hid its face in shame. The other gods pleaded on its behalf. They asked Ganesha to withdraw his curse.

Ganesha did. But he said that his curse would still have its effect on one day in the year—the fourth of Bhadrapad.

It is said that even Krishna could not escape it. He happened to look at the moon on the forbidden day, and was accused of theft.

After the rains Kerala is all lush and green. More colour comes from the flowers blooming every-



where. The harvest has been cut. The mood is festive.

Onam is a unique festival. People of all faiths celebrate it. But with the festival is linked the story of Vishnu's fifth avatar or incarnation.

Long ago, there ruled in Kerala a king called Mahabali. True to his name, he was powerful. So powerful that even the gods began to fear him.

They begged Vishnu to

do something. Vishnu came down to earth as Vaman, a dwarf brahmin. He approached Mahabali for a piece of land—as much as three of his steps would cover.

The king granted it. But when it came to measuring, the dwarf, in no time, grew into a giant. With one step he covered the earth, and with the second, the sky.

As there was no place where he could put his

foot for the thind step, Mahabali bowed his head before him. Vishnu pushed him to Patala, the lower world.

But Mahabali loved his people. He prayed that he be allowed to visit them once a year. Vishnu agreed. And so Mahabali comes to Kerala at *Onam* time.

He is pleased to see his people. For the festival they clean their homes. Then they decorate them with floral patterns and brass lamps.

They put on new clothes. And they eat the

best sweets and savoury dishes. Women dance a traditional dance. Children fly kites and have fun.

Men have their outdoor sports. On the rivers and back waters are held races in long snake boats. At night kathakali performances are staged in the open or in temples.

Like Ganesha Chaturthi, Onam is also great tourist attraction.

With the waning moon of Bhadon begins a quiet fortnight. The Hindus then pay homage to their pitri—forefathers In their

memory they feed brahmins or give alms to the poor.



Gaiety comes back as the moon waxes again. The first nine days are Navaratri (literally nine nights). They are dedicated to Durga. She is Parvati in the form of Shakti—power—or the warrior goddess.

Durga is worshipped all over India. But Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Bengal honour her in their own styles. Some prople visit her shrines (under such names as Vaishno Devi) in the hills.

Well-known are the nine nights of dance in

Gujarat. In colourful costumes, men and women dance garba and dandiya raas. Dandiyas are short, painted sticks which the dancers tap rhythmically, as they dance in a circle.

The tenth day is called Vijayadashmi. It is the day of Durga's victory over

the buffalo demon, Mahishasura. It is also the day of Rama's victory over Ravana. But more about these festivals next month.

At this time Bengal has Vishwakarma puja. Vishwakarma is the architect of the gods. Artisans worship him as their deity.

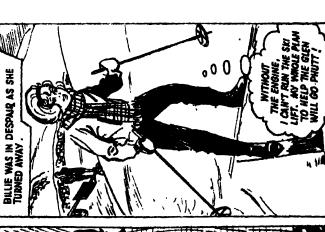
This is also the wedding season. While there is festival music and dancing, there is also the blaring of marriage bands.

The air virtually throbs with the drums of festivity.

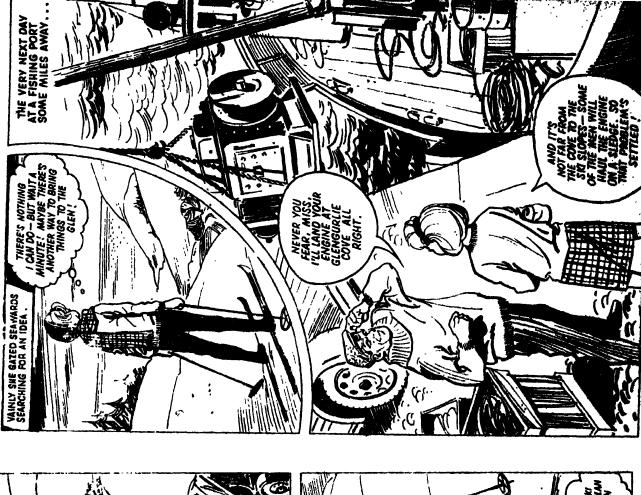


OUR LAIRD'S A LASSIE - PART 5

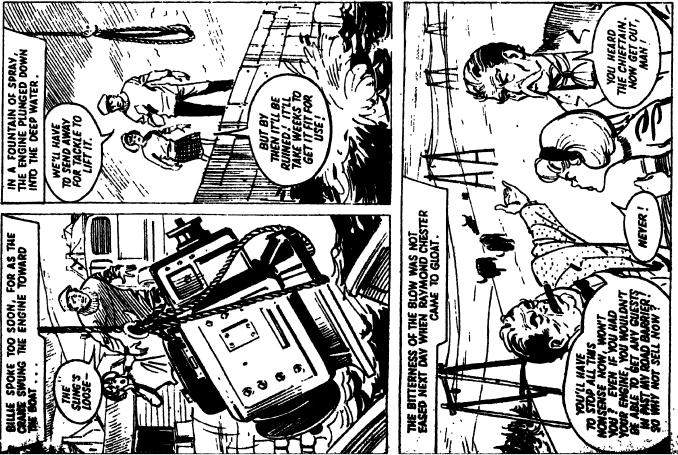
























HE ELEPHONE ALK

Story: Saibal Chakravarty Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

UMU COULD see the old man through the thick glass of the telephone-booth. He looked famished as usual with his unshaven cheeks and a torn wrapper draped over his frail body. He had an empty tin in his hand which he stretched out and asked for help of all those who passed by. There was a little boy sitting beside him. The boy possibly did not know the purpose of their sitting on the pavement. He sometimes looked at the sky or waved out to speeding buses. Mumu guessed that he must be the old:



man's grandson. She was then dialling Aunty
Tinku's number. The first time the number was engaged. She was paying more attention to the cute boy. Mumu wished that she could give him a name. Chotu! Suddenly this name sprang up in her mind.

Aunty Tinku came on the line. As she said, "Hallo", Mumu dropped the one rupee coin inside the box. The conversation started immediately.

Telephoning people was a great joy for Mumu now—especially after she had learnt to use the automatic telephones at public booths. This one was installed a couple of months back at a corner of 'Good Morning Stores', the shop selling bread, butter and other food articles.

The shop was within two hundred yards of Mumu's house. It was run by Mrs. Saxena or Aunty Gopa as she was known to Mumu and other children. Mumu was a regular visitor to 'Good Morning' to make phone calls and also to buy daily necessities. Dialling the number, putting the coin inside the box, she would talk to Aunty Tinku, Bibididi or her friend, Nipa 🖟 Chaturvedi. As Mumu

talked, she could see people walk along the pavement, buses whizzing past and the old beggar and the boy taking their position under the street lamp. They would be there till noon. Then again in the evening, Mumu would see them sitting at the same place on her way back from school. The pair brought a touch of sorrow to the otherwise cheerful set-up of Jodhpur Park, with shops full of luxury goods, toys and happy children going to school or art classes. Mumu wondered why they had to beg. But she was such a shy girl that she could hardly muster enough courage to speak her mind.

Mumu also thought a lot about telephones. What a wonderful discovery it was. To talk over the telephone was a fascinating experience for her. It intrigued her how by just dropping a coin two lines got connected, making it possible for two people at two far ends of a city to talk. Mumu imagined the coin getting lost in an endless vacuum. If she could hear the sweet tinkling sound while she dropped it, then it would have been a more pleasing experience for her.

Now Aunty Gopa had become a good friend. Generally, Mumu used the phone on holidays. Around ten o'clock, when she finished her studies, she would ask her mother for a rupee and go to 'Good Morning' to talk to someone who was willing to talk.

"Want to use the phone?" Aunty Gopa would ask Mumu as she appeared at the entrance of 'Good Morning'. "Go," she would point her finger to the kiosk, "there's no one there. Have a good chat with your friends or someone you love."

Just as Mumu got the connection and Bibididi came on the line saving. "Is that Mumu? Oh, Mumu, I wanted to tell you something very important..." at that moment, she would see the old beggar. He would pace up and down the pavement for a while and then sit at the fixed spot. Mumu couldn't concentrate on the conversation. She would keep on looking at the beggar and Chotu while Bibi went on asking, "What's wrong with you, Mumu? Can't you hear me properly? I heard that there's going to be a big party for your birthday next month. Aunty must

be very happy because you did so well in the exam."

Conversation over. Mumu came out of the shop. The whole pavement was bathed in sunlight. The place was full of hectic activity. The old man and Chotu sat like shadows under a lamp post. The old man stretched out his hand, holding the tin towards Mumu. But unfortunately she didn't have any money to pay him. She had had only the one rupee coin which she had used for making the phone call. Mother had forbidden her to give money to beggars. "All of them are not genuine beggars," she said. "There are many who beg only to earn without working." Mumu had no idea whether this man was a real or a fake beggar. For a twelve-yearold girl it was too early to know the world. But she had lots of sympathy for this man and the boy. She felt upset that she couldn't help them—a feeling almost akin to the emptiness of losing the one rupee coin in the unseen depths of the telephone box.

There was heavy rain for about a week. Part of

Selimpore where Mumu lived was flooded with water as were some other areas of the city. Mumu could not go to school for three days and could catch the bus only after the water started receding. She could not talk to Bibididi also for all these days. Mumu was very attached to her cousin who was about five years her elder. Both of them learnt dance from the same teacher.

On that day a dance programme by Malti Krishnan, their teacher, was to be held at Kalamandir. Public transport was yet to become normal following the rains. Mumu's mother wanted to find out if it would be possible for Bibi to pick up Mumu from their place.

"Mumu, why don't you telephone Bibi and find out whether she can pick you up. Obviously she will be going by car. Your father will return late from office and I have so much work at home...

Father may collect you from the theatre after the show is over ... See whether you can fix it up with Bibi."

Mumu jumped at the idea. Telephoning people always interested her.

Specially Bibididi or friends like Nipa and Aruna. She had still about an hour to get ready for school. She put on her yellow frock and stretched out her hand, "Money, mummy," she said. "Quickly please."

"Hallo, Mumu, what horrid weather we have had, dear," Aunty Gopa complained as soon as Mumu stepped into 'Good Morning'. "Very few people came to buy things from my shop these last few days, and my supplies too were very erratic ... I am only happy that it's over and it is so much cooler now."

"Aunty, could I use the telephone ...?"

"Of course, you may, my dear," Aunty Gopa quickly responded. "But see if it's working. I tried to contact the bakery in the morning, but there was no dial tone ..."

Mumu got into the kiosk. She lifted the receiver and dialled the number. But there was no response. The line was obviously dead due to water-logging at various places.

When she came out, she found the old beggar standing under the lamppost. She stood there for a minute and looked at his

face. It was strange. He understood what she wanted to know.

"He got drenched in the rains as I did," Mahim, the old man, explained. "But he caught a cold and now is down with fever ... I don't know when he will be fit to join me." Mumu felt like praying for Chotu's quick recovery. She wanted to comfort the old man and tell him that he would come round soon. Then one day she could take Chotu to her mother to show her how cute a boy he was.

Mumu wanted to tell
the old man that she
would pray for Chotu's
recovery. But she did not
speak about it to him.
Mumu remembered her
mother's words, "If you
want to do something,
don't go on bragging about
it to others. Work silently
for it. You did well in the
exams because you
worked on your own. That
is the best way to achieve
anything you want to."

Mumu took a step forward then put the one rupee coin into the tin held by the old beggar and said, "Buy Chotu something with this. Anything he wants to have."

She heard a sweet tinkling sound as the coin touched the bottom of the tin. The old man muttered a few words obviously of thanks to Mumu. She could not follow what he said. Her ears were filled with the sound produced by the dropping of the coin. As if that coin connected two distant lines, with Chotu cheerfully speaking from the other end, "Thank you, Mumudidi. Thank you for

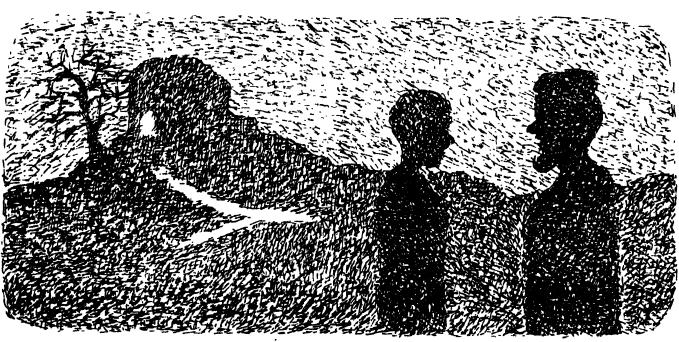
being good and helpful."

Never had Mumu felt as happy while talking over the telephone as she did now. Even though today the instrument did not work, she felt she,had heard the sweetest voice, which prompted her to respond to it quickly.

'Get well soon, dear Chotu,' Mumu mused as she walked back home with a happy heart.







Story: Poile Sengupta

had come back after a long time, twenty, ■ maybe twenty-five years. Many things can happen in that timegovernments fall, languages change, people become different. But not Veerpal, who looked the same; not like his name at all. Veerpal should have been tall, muscular, with a blazing moustache and a voice that thundered across deserts and plains. But he wasn't like that. He was small and withered like a peanut shell, and when he spoke, which was seldom, he stammered just a little bit.

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

And the second second

He recognised me at once, "S... so you are back?" he asked. "How long will you stay?"

"I'm not sure," I said.
"A week or a month. It depends."

He did not ask what I meant as I knew he would not. Veerpal was never curious, but he had always cared enough to wait for whatever he should be told.

"It depends," I said, "on what I find. Or whether I find it at all. The answer to my question."

"The s... same question?" he asked.

"The same," I replied.

He did not speak for a while, then, "It's the same night," he said. "It's Diwali on the same day this time. That day.
Y... you remember?"

The same day. That day. Every year, the festival shifts like a lantern that needs to be moved to light up other places but this year it was back where it had been that day.

"I remember," I said.
"The lights. The noise.
Everybody laughing. The sweets ... Why are there no lights now?"

"There have been no... no lights since that day," he said painfully. "No lights... no s...sweets."

"No laughter," I
commented.

"No laughter. How can there b...be laughter when friend turned against friend, brother against brother?"

"It was a Hindu festival," I said. "We should have stayed in our own houses."

"What use is a festival i...if you can't share it? Is it a shameful secret that you m...must put away?"

His voice shook as it had all those years ago when he had come running into a burning house, crying for me, calling out, calling out...

"Azad baba, Azad baba, baba Azad."

And I heard the laughter again, mocking laughter, harsh and noisy like the crackers going off everywhere.

"This is not your festival. It is ours. You go to your country to celebrate your festivals."

And then the lights magnified a thousand, a hundred thousand times and they came at me like the uncountable eyes of a monster, a large, fiery, smoking monster.

"Azad baba... baba Azad."

"No lights," he said

softly. "No sweets."

"And no answer to my question?" I asked.

He shook his head. "There is no answer to your question. N...none."

Then from far away but coming nearer, voices; voices loud, derisive, drunk with low, feeble, flickering understanding.

"The ghost hut," the voices laughed, "where that stupid watchman's ghost lives. Veerpal, the cowardly watchman. The

cowardly ghost."

I wanted to shout, I wanted to yell. I wanted to say, 'He is not cowardly, he lost his eyes trying to save me. He is blind but you can't see. He is full of understanding, he knows but he won't tell me that answer to my question.'

Was it worth it trying to save me? Was it?

But I couldn't shout, I couldn't yell.

After all, I was the



TEJU AND THE TORTOISE

Story: Geethanjali Illustrations: A.V. Prasanth

EJU and Roshini," Aunt Lekha said turning towards us, "I want to go out for a while. Will you look after Tinky till I come back?"

My brother. Teju, and I stared at each other. We had come to Thiruvananthapuram to spend our holidays with our aunt. A week at her place had made us wary of our baby cousin, Tinky. She was one year old and a little terror. Teju edged towards the door. "Er... Aunty, you know how nasty Tinky can get when you are not there ..."

Aunt Lekha looked
surprised. Then she said,
He "Don't worry. I shall put
ered to sleep and come
and who before she wakes up.
was selowo just have to keep
mered just on her. Your

uncle's boss and his family are coming for dinner tomorrow evening and I want to buy a few things." Teju and I could do nothing but agree to babysit Tinky. "You will be back soon, won't you, Aunty?" Teju asked anxiously as Aunty put Tinky in her cradle and sang her to sleep.

Aunty smiled reassuringly at us. "Of course," she said, "and I may bring some delicious cream buns for my two babysitters."

Once our aunt had left, Teju turned towards me. "Look here, Rosy, we have to be absolutely quiet. We can't afford to have Tinky wake up. Don't switch on the TV or radio, okay?"

"Okay, big brother!" I said with a smart salute. I threw a look at the sleeping Tinky. She looked like a little angel with her glossy curls spread on her pillow and her long, dark lashes

falling on her rosy cheeks like a thick curtain. Teju and I knew from experience that this sleeping beauty could become a regular devil when awake.

I tiptoed to the telephone and took the receiver off its hook. I was just tiptoeing back when the doorbell clanged, making me jump. Teju ran towards the door shaking a fist at the unknown caller. He opened the door with a dreadful scowl. The caller, my friend Preeti, took one step back as soon as she saw him. I ran out and explained briefly, "Tinky is asleep and Aunty has gone out. We are babysitting Tinky, so you had better be as quiet as possible."

Preeti's face cleared.
She knew Tinky's tantrums well and she understood why Teju was so tense. She slipped in silently. Tinky stirred.
We held our breath and crowded around the cradle. We straightened up in relief when Tinky turned on her side and fell asleep again.

"Come on, Preeti," I said putting my hand into Preeti's. "I shall show you my stamp album."

Teju had curled up in a sofa with a book, but now he leapt up and said

hastily, "Hey, Rosy, your stamp album is not there."

"What do you mean it's not there?" I demanded giving Teju my best I-amwaiting-for-an-explanation look.

"I took it yesterday. I gave it to my friend, Arun, in return for a ..."

"You gave Arun my stamp album?" I choked.

Teju saw the battle light in my eyes and said, "Don't you want to know what he gave me in return?"

"Shh... What's that noise?" Preeti asked suddenly. We fell silent. We looked at each other in dismay. It was Tinky. She was awake and she was bawling her head off. We ran to the cradle. Teju gingerly lifted Tinky out of the cradle. Preeti and I started singing all the lullabies we could think of until Teju said testily, "Stop it, you two. Your songs are only making her cry harder. Go on and bring her toys, Rosy."

I rummaged Tinky's toy shelf and came back with an armful of toys. Teju set Tinky on the floor and we arranged the toys next to her. Tinky only cried louder. "I wish Aunty would come soon," Teju went on like a stuck record. Tinky kicked out at her toys and, drawing a deep breath, bawled even louder than before. Then suddenly she stopped. She was staring at something on the floor. I followed the line of her gaze and leapt onto a sofa. Preeti gave a scream and followed suit. Teju grinned and said, "Get down from that sofa, girls. It's only a tortoise."



"How did a tortoise come here?" I demanded jumping down from the sofa.

"As I tried telling you before, I traded your stamp album for this tortoise," Teju said airily. "I had kept him in my room. I wonder how he came here. I guess he was doing a bit of exploring."

"Do you mean to say that you gave Arun my stamp album in return for a creepy-crawly creature?" I thundered.

"You don't know his worth," Teju said coldly. "He has his uses. Look how he made Tinky shut up! The three of us together couldn't do that, could we?"

I had no answer to that. Tinky was sitting happily, staring at the tortoise. I heard the sound of a door being opened. "Care to bet as to whether Aunty will be glad to see your latest pet, Teju?"

Teju glowered at me.
Then he said hastily, "You won't split on me, will you, Rosy?" He picked up his tortoise and left the room a few seconds before
Aunty came into the room.
Aunty was surprised to see Tinky awake and smiling. "She didn't trouble you at all, did she?" she asked gathering Tilly up in her arms.

Teju spent the rest of the day making sure that Aunty did not come to his room. The next day when we were playing in the garden, we heard a scream. This was followed by an ominous "Teju, come up here, will you?"

"She must have come upon your Slowcoach torte ise. You had better



CHILDREN'S WORLD SEPTEMBER 1995

get ready to say goodbye to it!" I sniggered.

Teju gave me a nasty look and bolted upstairs. I followed him. We found Aunt Lekha staring at something inside the plastic basin in Teju's bathroom. We looked inside. Sure enough there lay Slowcoach looking very much at home.

"Don't tell me that this is one of your pets, Teju!" Aunty said wearily. "Get rid of him at once."

Teju pleaded. Much to my own surprise I found myself joining him in asking that Slowcoach be allowed to stay. Aunt finally relented. "Okay, but just be sure that he does not come near me or Tinky."

Teju and I promised that Slowcoach would not disturb her. She smiled at us and then said, "I want you two to wear your best clothes this evening. Uncle's boss is coming to dinner. He will be bringing his wife and son, too. I hope that you will be able to make Suraj feel at home."

That evening Teju and I found ourselves trying to amuse an obviously bored Suraj. His mother looked equally bored. Aunty looked worried. Teju and I searched for something interesting to say. Suraj



stuck his hands in his pockets and stared out moodily.

"Pretty stuck up kid, isn't he?" Teju whispered

to me. "Want to see me give him a jolt, Rosy?"
Teju ran to his room and, much to my surprise and horror, he came back with his tortoise.

There was a moment's silence in the room. I did not dare to meet my Aunt's eye. Then Suraj broke the silence with a "How wonderful! A real, live tortoise! Is he yours, Teju?"

"This is rather an unusual pet," Suraj's mother came towards us. "Where did you get him?"

Teju was soon explaining how he got Slowcoach. The bored expression had fled from Suraj's fate. "Can I carry him, Teju?" he begged.

Uncle and his boss also came to have a look at Slowcoach. "Dad," Suraj turned towards his father "can we buy him from Teju?"

I felt anger surge up in me. This spoilt, rich brat had been brought up to think that anything could be bought. I saw Teju's 💲 shocked look and said, "Slowcoach is not for sale. He means a lot to Teju and I'm sure he won't like to give him up."

Suraj's mother took one look at his downcast face. Then she said, "How would you like a Dalmatian pup in exchange, Teju?"

Teju stared at the floor. Then he stared at Aunt Lekha I too looked at Aunty anxiously. She had wanted this evening to be

a success. Would she expect Teju to give up his pet to please Suraj and his parents?

Aunt Lekha said nothing for a while. Then she said in her firm, kind voice, "I'm afraid that Teju

has grown attached to his pet. It won't be fair to ask him to give it away now." Uncle nodded.

Surai's mother said slowly, "Yes, that's true. Anyway, it won't harm Suraj to take 'No' for an answer once in a while. Now, Suraj, don't look so glum. I shall try to see if I can find you a tortoise at one of the pet shops. If I can't get one I'm afraid that you have just got to accept the fact."

Suraj nodded. The rest of the evening went off quite well.

As they rose to leave after dinner, Suraj's mother said, "I think it will be a good idea if Teju and Rosy come to visit us often. They will be good for Suraj."

"Please do bring Slowcoach for a visit when you come!" Suraj begged.

As the car disappeared from view Uncle heaved a sigh, "That went off rather well, didn't it?"

"Yes," Aunty smiled. "But things were getting rather dull until Teju brought out his tortoise. Trust Teju to liven things up!"

Teju went red with pleasure. Then he said, "Actually, the credit should go to Slowcoach. He really made Suraj and his parents come out of their shells!"

PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly. and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

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7642 Swati V. Shivkamat (14) c/o V.R. Shivkamat Canara Bank, Sanquelim Goa 403505, India Making friends, dancing France, Germany

7643 Reena Saha (12) c/o Sub Post Master (S.P.M.) P.O. Belampur, Port Blair Andaman 744102, India Stamps and coins Any country

7644
Garima Kohli (10)
K/51/B, Sheikh Sarai
Phase II
New Delhi 110017, India
Making friends, skating
Any country

7645 Neethu Joseph (13) Kannikanatha Convent Boarding Palakkad, Kerala, India Reading, cricket Any country

7646 Sahreen Alam (14) A 187, J.D.A. Colony Malviya Nagar,

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENROLMENT FORM

ĺ		,		
Member1	Vo ((To be filled by	office) Issue da	ted
Name: M	ister / Miss		Age*	Years
		(IN BLOCK LET	TERS)	
Address:		.,	••••••	
	•••••	•••••	•••••••	
Hobbies:	•	•••••		
Pen-frien	ds wanted in (Coi	intry)	••••••	······
*Age limit: 1	6 years			Signature

GIRLS

Jaipur 302017 Rajasthan, India Painting, dance U.S.A., Japan

7647
Tashi Chazom (13)
Wangdi Lhamo
Shopkeeper Yonphula
P.O. Kanglung
Dist. Tashigang
East Bhutan
Philately
Any country

7648
Rasika Janartha (13)
Cottage No. 1
Old Brockhurst
Chotta Shimla
Shimla 171009
Himachal Pradesh, India
Music, reading
U.S.A., India

7649
Tina Haldar (14)
Q.No. 35/C Type I
Sector IV
Chanda
Dist. Chandrapur
Maharashtra 442501, India
Dancing, music
Any country

7650 Anubhuti Joshi (13) 24-A/1 Hira Nagar Patiala 147001, Punjab Studying, basketball India

7651 Priyanjali S. (10) Sumati Villa, Telang Road Lonavia 410401

50 \$ ·

Maharashtra, India Karate, reading Any country

7652
Gale Gomes (13)
St. Joseph's Convent
Panchgani 412805
Maharashtra, India
Philately, collecting
stickers
Mauritius, India

7653
P. Catherine (16)
55, 4th Extension
Gandhipuram
Coimbatore 641012
Tamil Nadu, India
Listening to music,
gardening
Switzerland, New Zealand

7654
Ankitha Bhatnagar (11)
153, Pocket B, SFS Flats
Sukhdev Vihar
New Delhi 110025, India
Making pen-friends,
reading
France, Australia

7655
Seema Sachdeva (16)
2418/7A Housing Board
Colony
Faridabad, Haryana
Music, making friends
India

7656
Namita Moses (11)
c/o Mr. R. Moses
S.D.A. Centre
11, Hailey Road
New Delhi 110001; India

Playing piano, reading Other than India

7657
Kanika Bhanot (12)
A-1, Mandakini Enclave
Greater Kailash II
New Delhi 110019, India
Dancing, making friends
Any country except India

7658
Shipra Gupta (11)
11/249 Geeta Colony
Delhi 110031, India
Painting, dancing
Any country

7659
Anjana Philip (15)
Nedumchirayil House
Sacred Heart Mount P.O
Kottayam, Kerala, India
Painting, karate
Any country

7660
Binapani Deori (10)
c/o Mr. P.K. Deori (Asstt.)
Budget Branch
A.P. Secretariat
Itanagar 791111
Arunachal Pradesh, India
Drawing, handicrafts
Any country

7661
Ruchita Maru (13)
Balaji Udyog
B-84 Indraprasth
Industrial Area
Kota 324005
Rajasthan, India
Stamp collection, penfriends
Any country

CHILDREN'S WORLD SEPTEMBER 1996

GIRLS

7662 Sumedha Sarpal (12) B-3/3, Krishna Nagar Delhi 110051, India Modelling, painting U.S.A., India

7663
Ashima Punj (11)
H.No. 1850 A, Sector 29
Housing Board Colony
Faridabad, Haryana, India
Dancing, reading
Australia, U.S.A.

7664
Rosemary Doley (14)
c/o Mr. Bhaba Kanta Doley
Chandan Nagar, Club Road
Jorhat 785001
Assam, India
Reading, dancing
Canada, Japan

7665 K. Jaya (13) No. 12, Valmiki St. T. Nagar, Madras 600017 Tamil Nadu, India Swimming, reading Any country

7666
Ankita Kanojia (13)
C2A/252B, Janakpuri
New Delhi 110058, India
Swimming, card collection
Any country

7667
Sonam (13)
A-2/46 Safdarjang Enclave
New Delhi 110029, India
Horse riding, swimming
Any country

7668 Nivedita Bose (14) D-627, Chittaranjan Park New Delhi 110019, India Making pen-pals Any country

7669
Atisha Varsjmeu (10)
A-14, Anita Colony
Jaipur-302015, Rajasthan
India
Craft, cycling
Australia, New Zealand

7670
Joyita (12)
153, Agrico Tisco Flats
Agrico
Jamshedpur 831009
Bihar, India
Reading books, music
U.S.A., Japan

7671
Anu Susan Paul (14)
c/o K.V. Paulose
P.W.I., S/Rly, Alwaye
Kerala, India
Dancing, making friends
Japan, Singapore
7672

S. Lavanya (11)
Plot No. 6, Shanthi Avenue
Selaiyur P.O.
Madras 600073
Tamil Nadu, India
Reading, dancing
U.S.A., U.K.

7673
Indrani (12)
236 Samachar Apartments
Mayur Vihar
Phase 1 Extn.
New Delhi 110091
Painting, dancing
Any country

7674
Swati (16)
115/16, Friends Publishers
Jhajjar Road, Rohtak
Haryana, India
Dancing, reading
Any country

7675 Nikita (15) C-10/108 Yamuna Vihar Delhi 110053, India Painting Switzerland, U.S.A.

7676
Sudeshna Basu (14)
70/10, Kaupada
Mukherjee Road
Barisha, Calcutta 700008
West Bengal, India
Painting, reading
Any country

7677
P. Gayathri (15)
220, Ponnaiyarajapuram
Coimbatore 641001
Tamil Nadu, India
Reading, collecting pens
U.S.A.

7678
Kirti Gupta (12)
128, Rajendra Nagar
Street No. 4, Lane No. 4
Dehradun, U.P. 248001
India
Reading, making friends
Any country

7679
Simple Prasad (12)
D-2/111, Janakpuri
New Delhi 110058, India
Reading, writing
Any country

7680

Arijit Mandal (15)
153 Agrico Tisco Flat
P.O. Agrico
Jamshedpur 831009
Bihar, India
Painting, cricket
Any country

7681 Roshan Gopal (16) c/o Dhiraj Kumar Flat No. 435, Indra Vihar Delhi 110009, India Modelling, music Any country

7682
Pema Renchen (15)
Class IX-B
Jigme Sherubling High
School
Vill:Thruepang
Dist. Trashigang, Khaling
East Bhutan, Bhutan
Reading, travelling
India, Japan

7683
Madhum Jain (10)
76 State Bank Colony
Near Rana Pratap Bagh
Delhi 110033, India
Cricket, badminton
Germany, China

7684
Kinley Choksy (15)
Class VIII-A
Zhemgang High School
Bhutan
Pen-friends, reading
Any country

7685 Sachir, Kalani (14) D-38 R. Jouri Garden New Delhi 110027, India Computers Any country

7686
Aman Sharma (16)
C-1 Maharani Bagh
C.R.R.I. Colony
New Delhi 110065, India
Making new friends
Europe, U.S.A.

7687
Tashi Wangchuk (8)
Class VIII-A
Trongsa School
Bhutan
Music, pen-friends
Any country

7688
Abhilash Johan (12)
c/o Smt. V.B. Amritavalli,
L.D.C., NSTL
Vishakhapatnam
Andhra Pradesh, India
Pets, stamps
U.S.A., Switzerland

7689
Narendra Pushkar (16)
A-260 Gharoli,
Mayur Vihar Phase III
Delhi 110096, India
Making friends, writing
poems
Any country

7690
Praveen Raj A.V. (14)
Shivaji House
Sainik School
Kazhakootam
Thiruvananthpuram
Kerala 695585, India
Making friends, movies
Any country

7691
S. Balaji (14)
22/7, Gopal Street
T. Nagar, Madras 600017
Tamil Nadu, India
Reading, stamp collecting
India, Japan

7692
Vasantha P. (15)
s/o Padmanabha
Kendriya Vidyalaya
Staff Qrts.
P.O. Panambur
Mangalore 575010
Karnataka, India
Stamps, painting
China, Switzerland

7693
Dillo Kumar Sarkar (16)
c/o Smt. Chaya Rani
Sarkar
S.T.N. H.Q. Dingjan
Dist. Dibrugarh, Assam
c/o 99 A.P.O., India
Composing poems, songs
Any country

7694
Nawang Tshering (15)
Yangcuenphug High
School, Class X
Thimphu, Bhutan
Dancing, coin collection
Any country

7695
Purna Chhetri (13)
HAA Junior High School
Class VIII, P.O. HAA
Bhutan
Music
Any country

7696 Rajib Mazumdar (16)

c/o Mr. G.C. Mazumdar 161/A Unit 11, Babuline Kḥaragpur, West Bengal India Reading, movies India, U.S.A.

7697
Dinesh (14)
Taps Colony, Type 1 W-4
Post Taps, Dist.
Thane 401504
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, reading
U.S.A., Japan

7698
Sandeep Gopal (12)
Behind C.S.T. Church
Jail Road, Talap
Kannur, Kerala 670002
India
Guitar, swimming
U.S.A., Australia

7699
Abhinandan (9)
B - 668, Delhi Administration Flats
Timarpur, Delhi 110054
India
Painting, sports
Any country

7700
Sujith Chandran (13)
c/o Mr. K. Ramachandran
Pillai
Kodiyathu House, Pada
North
Karunagappally P.O.
Quilon Dist.
Kerala 690518, India
Painting, stamp collection
Any country

7701
Manuj Jain (15)
799, Patel Nagar
Civil Lines, Ludhiana
Punjab, India
Reading, watching movies
Any country

7702
S. Rishi Das
Roll No. 2859
Nehru House
Sainik School P.O.
Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala, India
Stamp & coin collection
Any country

7703
Avinash Mehra (15)
2431 Luv House
Sainik School
Chittorgarh 312001
Rajasthan, India
Reading, music
Any country

7704
K. Karthic (13)
220 Ponniarasapuram
Coimbatore 641001
Tamil Nadu, India
Stamp collecting, currency
& coins
Japan

7705
Nikhil Khera (16)
646-L, Model Town
Panipat, Haryana 132103
India
Listening to music, cycling
India, U.S.A.

7706 Vipin Allen (15) 107-109, Sadar Kabair Bazar Meerut Cantt. U.P., India Stamps, reading U.S.A., India

7707 Siddharth (16) 127 Kadambari 19/9 Rohini New Delhi 110085 Rock music, reading India

7708
Mohinder Pratap (15)
c/o Mr. Madanlal Sharma
Reghunath Colony
Loharu Road, P.O. Pilani
Dist. Jhunjhunu
Rajasthan
India
Stamp collection,
friendship
India, Russia

7709
Jninley Bruksa (15)
Wamrong Junior High
School
P.O. Wamrong, Tashigang
Bhutan
Telling jokes, fishing
Any country

7710
Taru Haku (14)
Vivekanand Kendra
Vidyalaya
Sunpura, P.O. Sunpura
(Teju)
Lohit Dist.
Arunachal Pradesh 792203
India
Reading, telling jokes
Other than India

7711
P. Prajesh Prasad (13)
Prajesh Nilaya
Bhuwaneshwary Nagar
J.B. Post
Bangalore 560050

Karnataka Stamps, songs

India

Mondy (16)

B-3/26C, Gasta Colony

Paschim Vihar

New Delhi 110063, India

Music, reading Any country

7713

Rajesh P. Chandnani (14) D-71 IFFCO, Udaynagar Gandhidam (Kutch) Gujarat, India Badminton & tennis Any country

7714

Deepak Sonanki (16) D-45,DDA Flats New Ranjeet Nagar New Delhi 110008, India Making friends, dancing Any country

Any countr

7715
Vishal Gupta (15)
F-62, Moti Bagh-I
New Delhi 110021
Collecting stamps and
magazine advertisements
India

7716 Sanjeev Chandy (16) c/o Mrs. Saramma Chandy

A.N.M. School

54 ·

M.G.M., M.C.H Hospital P.O. Sanchi J.S.R. Bihar, India Music, reading Australia, U.S.A.

7717 Vikas Bajaj (15)

F-18 B, Street No. 14

Nehru Street

Laxmi Nagar, Delhi 110092

India

Writing, cricket Any country

7718

Gopal Faruka (13) Sanjeewan Vidyalaya

Tilak House

Panchgani 412805

Dt. Satara

Maharashtra, India

Table tennis China, Japan

7719

Yatish Shelke (14) Sanjeewan Vidyalaya

Tagore House

Panchgani 412805

Dist. Satara

Maharashtra, India

Rugby, skiing

U.S.A., Canada

7720

Ravi Chhetri Class VIII-A

Trongsa Junior High School P.O. Trongsa, Bhutan

Reading comics, making

pen-friends Any country

7721

Shobit Dixit (12)

Embassy of India
Abu Dhabi
c/o Ministry of External
Affairs
New Delhi 110011

New Delhi 11001 Reading, music Any country

7722

Atul Joshi (13)

'Siddhivinayak' Odlem Bhat

Taliegaon, Panaji Goa 403003, India Reading, pen-friendship

Australia, Canada

7723

Sudeep Das (16) c/o Smt. Sipra Das Near Post Office Patel Colony, Sambra Belgaum 591124 Karnataka Reading, watching TV India

7724

Bandey Mili (13) c/o Principal Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya

Roing School
Dibang Valley

Arunachal Pradesh 792110

India

Football, reading Any country

7725

Dina Mili (10)

Vivekananda Kendra

Vidyalaya Roing School

Dibang Valley Dist.

Arunachal Pradesh 792110

CHILDREN'S WORLD SEPTEMBER 1996

India 7730 Monggar Royal Government of Football, singing Naiten Dorii (12) Bhutan Any country Chaskhar Primary School Bhutan Monggar 7726 Royal Government of Playing, painting Thempa Pulu (9) Bhutan Any country Vivekananda Kendra Painting, playing Vidyalaya 7735 India Roing School Sangey Dorji B. (16) Dist. Dibang Valley Chaskhar Primary School 7731 Arunachal Pradesh 792110 Royal Government of Chekey Wangchuk (13) India Bhutan Chaskhar Primary School Making friends Monggar, Bhutan Monggar Any country Playing, collecting Royal Government of Bhutan currency 7727 Bhutan Any country Eho Pulu (11) Drawing, collecting Vivekananda Kendra 7736 currency Vidyalaya Sonam Norbu (12) China Roing School Chaskhar Primary School Dist. Dibang Valley Royal Government of 7732 Arunachal Pradesh 792110 Karma Dorji A. (13) Bhutan India Chaskhar Primary School Monggar, Bhutan Drawing, playing football Monggar Playing, collecting Any country Royal Government of currency Bhutan China 7728 Bhutan **Pramod G.R.** (15) 7737 Playing, collecting Roll No. 2846 Tashi (13) currency Prasad House Chaskhar Primary School China Sainik School Royal Government of Kazhakootom 695585 Bhutan 7733 Trivandrum Monggar; Bhutan Tshewang Tenzin (12) Kerala, India Playing, painting Chaskhar Primary School Singing, dancing India Monggar Any country Royal Government of 7738 7729 Bhutan Jigme (14) Jambay Lhendup.(13) Bhutan Chaskhar Primary School Chaskhar Primary School Drawing, painting Royal Government of Royal Government of Bhutan Bhutan Bhutan Monggar: Bhutan Monggar, Bhutan 7734 Playing, reading Singing, drawing Karma Dorji B. (16)

Chaskhar Primary School

Japan

Japan

Karchung (15) Chaskhar Primary School Royal Government of Bhutan Monggar, Bhutan Making friends, painting Any country 7740 Dorji Wangdi (16) Chaskhar Primary School Royal Government of Bhutan Monggar, Bhutan Drawing, painting Any country 7741 Dorji (14) Chaskhar Primary School Royal Government of Bhutan Monggar, Bhutan Reading stories, writing Any country 7742 Lekjay (14) Chaskhar Primary School Royal Government of Bhutan Monggar, Bhutan Reading stories, writing Any country 7742 Thekjay (14) Chaskhar Primary School Royal Government of Bhutan Monggar, Bhutan Reading, collecting currency Japan 7743 Tshewang Thinley (14) Chaskhar Primary School Royal Government of	Reading, writing China 7744 Karma (15) Chaskhar Primary School Royal Government of Bhutan Monggar, Bhutan Playing, painting Any country 7745 Bimal Janardhan (16) House No. 1771A Sector 29 Faridabad Haryana 121003 India Reading, stamps Any country 7746 Amit Bansal (16) 322, B-5 Sector 8 Rohini Delhi 110085 India Music, making friends 7747 J. Navin (14) No. 23A M.G. Road II Avenue Sastry Nagar Madras 600020 Tamil Nadu India Stamps, reading U.K., Singapore 7748 Ashish Agrawal (15)	Delhi 110095 India Stamps, coins India 7749 Thota Prashanath (16). s/o Dr. T. Rajgopala Street Door No. 16B II Main Shamrod Colony Bellary Karnataka, India Collecting currency Any country 7750 Vikas Kumar H. Patel (10) Shantinath Nagar Opp. State Bank AT&PO Bardoli Dist. Surat 394601 Gujarat, India Reading, cycling Any country 7751 Isaac Christopher Lal (15) House No. 1834, Sector 4 Urban Estate Gurgaon Haryana Stamps, currency Any country 7752 Vachan Anand (13) IX C Roll No. 314 Shri Ramakrishna Vidyashala Mysore Karnataka, India
•		

SHANKAR'S INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S COMPETITION 1996

RULES

- 1. The Competition is open to children all over the world. They should have been born on or after January 1, 1980.
- There is no entry fee.
- Competitors are free to choose the theme/subject they are interested in, or like most, for their paintings/ drawings/writings.
- 4. Each entry should be certified by the parents/guardian/teacher that it is the original, unaided work of the competitor done during 1995. Entries should be an individual effort and NOT a combined work.
- 5. Every entry should carry the following information in English and in BLOCK LETTERS, at the back of the painting/ drawing or at the end of the written work:
 - * First Name * Surname * Boy or Girl * Date of Birth * Nationality * Full postal address * Subject/title of the entry
- 6. No entry will be returned. The copyright of all entries will rest with Shankar's International Children's Competition.
- 7. All packets should be pre-paid/adequately stamped and mailed directly to reach:

Shankar's International Children's Competition

Nehru House

4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg

New Delhi-110002

- 8. Entnes sent by air cargo will not be accepted.
- 9. The last date for receipt of entries is October 31, 1995,

PAINTINGS/DRAWINGS

- 10. Black and white pencil drawings will not be accepted.
- 11. The size of each entry should NOT be less than 30 x 40 cm in size.
- 12. A competitor may submit upto 6 entries. They should NOT be mounted/framed.

WRITTEN WORK

- 13. Only entries in ENGLISH will be considered. Translations from other languages do not qualify for the competition.
- 14. Entries may be in the form of poems, plays, short stories, essays, descriptive writing, and the like.
- 15. A competitor may submit upto 6 entries. They should be in a neat handwriting or typed.

PRIZES

- 16. The entries will be judged by the organisers with the help of a jury.
- 17. The following prizes are offered:
 - i. The President of India's Gold Medai for the best painting/drawing.
 - ii. The Shankar's Award for the best written work.
 - iii. 24 Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Gold Medals for the next best paintings/drawings/written work.
 - iv. About 400 Silver Medals and 400 prizes.
 - v. Certificates of Merits to deserving entries.
- 18. Results will be announced in July 1996. Prize-winners will be informed individually by post.
- 19. The best entries will be published in Shankar's Children's Art Number, Volume 47. Selected entries will also appear in the monthly magazine for children, *Children's World*.
- 20. All competitors are entitled to a copy of the art Number (Vol. 47) at half price. They can reserve their copy by mailing the coupon.

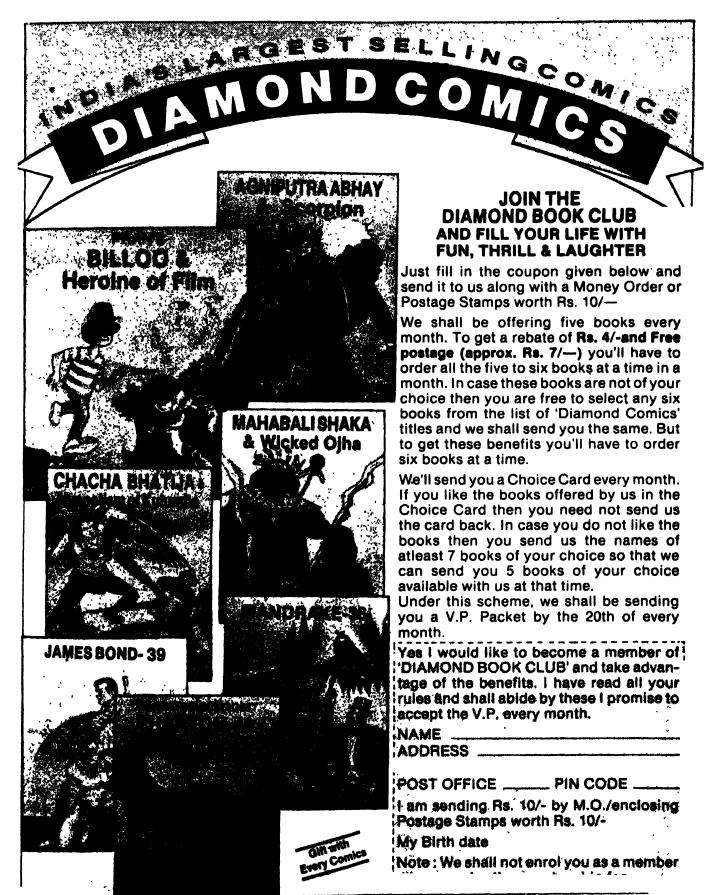


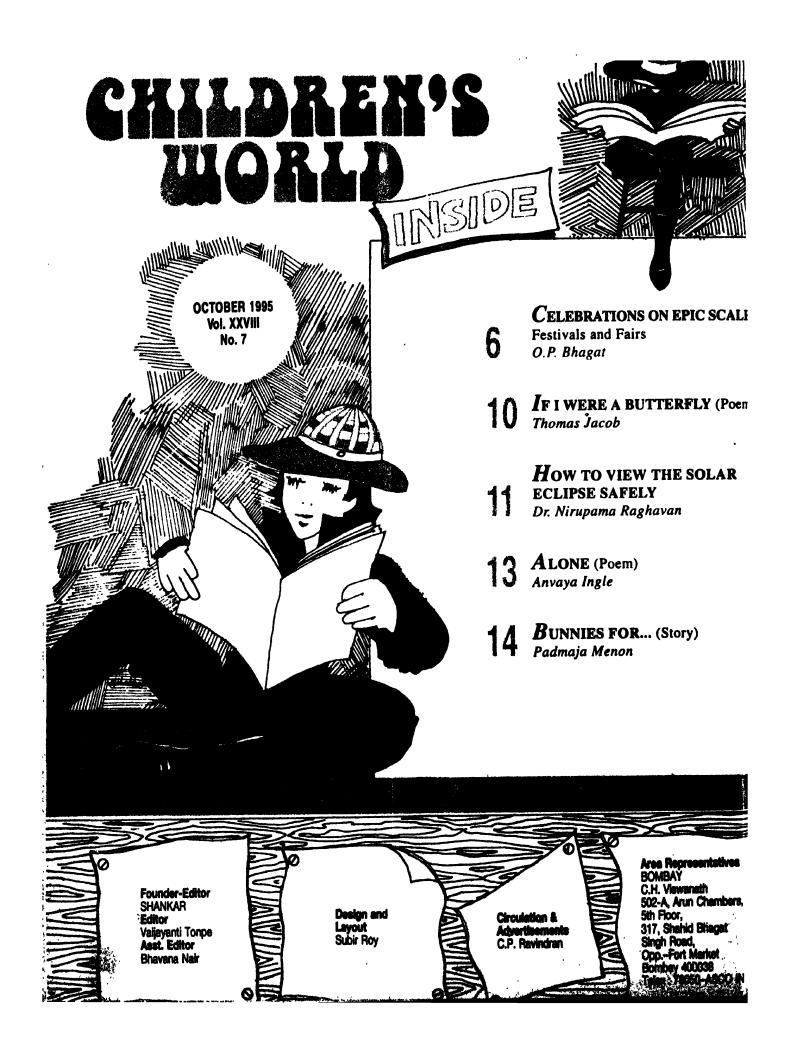


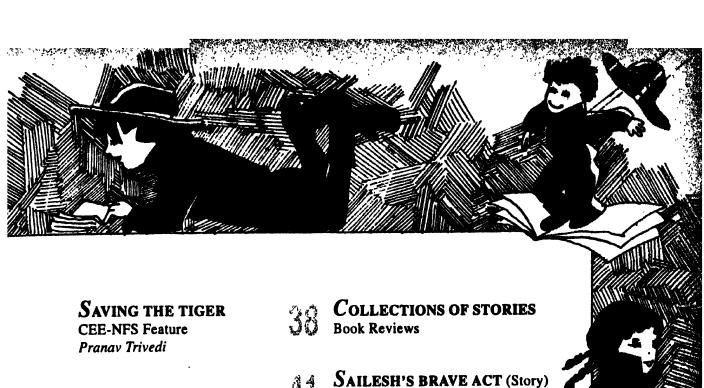




LARINS SAHIB
BY Gurcharan Das
PLAY DIRECTED BY
Barry John
PRODUCED AND ENACTED
BY
DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL, R.K. PURAM
THEATRE CLUB







Crossouiz Kamala Rajan

INNOCENCE (Story) L. Subramaniam

OUR LAIRD'S A LASSIE

A HELPING HAND (Story)
Maya S. Achar

SAILESH'S BRAVE ACT (Story)

COOKERY CORNER

THE HAUNTED HOUSE (Story) Homagni Chaudhuri

Precious possessions Experience Amit Roy

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THANK YOU. SCHOOL LIBRARIES

I like your magazine Children's World very much. This magazine gives us information, knowledge, fun,

Often, at school functions when I sit amongst children and listen to adults talk of weighty matters to their very young audience, of events past or of animals now extinct, I wonder at what they are really trying to convey to children through their words.

"If any of you, children, tell me you have seen a cheetah in its natural habitat—I will say vou are a liar because the cheetah became extinct in 1962. Long before any of you were born," pointed out the speaker on one such occasion. In most listeners, in that school, that day, the words had the stunning effect they were meant to. But in the front rows, where the tenyear-olds sat, there was a rapid exchange of puzzled glances... "Why is the speaker trying to make us look guilty for something that happened decades before we were born?" "Adults are a queer lot they keep telling children about mistakes they have made-of wars and killings they are responsible for."

How true! And what else can adults do to try and put things right—but to exhort children to beware of such inevitable pitfalls... and let no child tread where fools have ruled in?

Castoni, that a country

entertainment and is a complete book of children. I read this magazine regularly in my school library as it is not available anywhere near my house.

> Simple Prasad, New Delhi

produces, who practises and preaches non-violence, it also unfortunately produces a Veerappan who roams our depleted, and therefore very precious forests, wantonly killing animals and men. And. yet both, Gandhi and Veerappan were children once-with impressionable minds.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi used the influences of his childhood to become a positive person-and became a Mahatma and a leader. So much so that today, 125 years after his birth, his inspiring words have helped German schoolgirl Susanne Schweitzer to overcome her hatred for good-friend, Daniel's killersboys the same age as Danielwho killed him with no motive whatsoever. Susanne went through a state of intense hatred, to forgiveness for the killers, after she had finished reading Mahatma Gandhi's Worte Des Friedens (Words of Peace), that her sister Sonia had given her. So moving was her account of this change that Susanne's was the prizewinning essay in a contest for high school students in Germany on the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi to the world, 125 years after his birth.

Which brings me back to this adult obssession of

I am a student of Sainik School, Bhubaneswar, I always read Children's World in our school library. I like the poems and stories in it.

S.M. Tripathy, Bhubaneswar

Readers

linking the past and the present constantly for the benefit of children. How rapidly, how happily, our mind accepts something like celebration—Rama's victory over Ravan, Christ's birth, Diwali, Christmas, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday—events that happened centuries ago—because they signify holidays, goodies to eat, new clothes to wear, presents to share and so on... But wait... all these are associated with some very significant happenings or with a person who made a difference (for the better) to the world.

October is a beautiful month—it is full of events this year, that go beyond mere holidaying and celebrating. There's conservation of wildlife to think about from October 1-7 during the World Wildlife week. October 2 is Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. October 3 is Dussehra and so on and so forth till Diwali on October 23 and the solar eclipse on October 24.

Let us then, this month, look for the ideals we can make our own from these occasions.

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MILITARY OPERATIONS

Hair-raising situations of WORLD WAR I & II, Anti-Terrorist Rescue Operations & Suppression of political

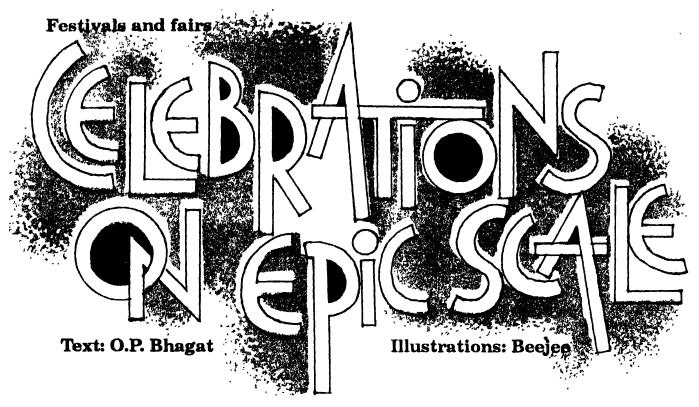


CIVILIZATIONS

Answers for inquisitive minds—How ancient civilizations were born. Their law, architecture and education. How some prospered and some declined



Narratives of wits of clever & terrorising deeds of insone would give readers several moments of laughter



UTUMN has already begun. In the daytime it may be warm. But October mornings are cool. So are the evenings. Another week or two, and it will be nicer.

Our autumn is different from the autumn of cold countries. No yellow or falling leaves. Every tree and shrub looks green. Trees like Harsinghar flower at this time.

After their long, bleak winter the people in Europe and America do spring-cleaning. We, too, do it. But more than that we need autumn-cleaning.

The rains leave many stains and smells in the rooms and outside. Certain things have to be

repaired, too. The houses are cleaned. The walls and doors are given a fresh coat of paint. The rooms are redecorated.

So is it in the markets. Every shop wears a new look. In fact, the whole town gets a face-lift. The shine and glitter is that of a festival.

Well, autumn is festival season. The brightest of our festivals come off at this time.

It is the beginning of our tourist time, too. No doubt visitors come to India in all seasons. But there is a boom when the cooler days set in. Many foreigners come to see our autumn celebrations.

On October 2 is Gandhi Jayanti. It is Mahatma

Gandhi's birthday. This year the day has added significance. It is the 125th anniversary.

Gandhi Jayanti is not a festival. But on this day the nation remembers the Mahatma. In Delhi people visit his samadhi at Rajghat and offer flowers there. Hymns or lines from the sacred books of all religions are sung or recited.

Prayer meetings are held in other towns, too.

In October, Delhi celebrates Phoolwalon ki Sair or the flower festival. It is a festival of unity and friendship. People of all communities take part in it.

The festival dates back to the late Mughal times.





During the freedom movement it was stopped by the British. Then Jawaharlal Nehru revived it.

It is a festival of music and dance. The venue is Mehrauli. It is that part of Delhi where the Qutub Minar stands. Both Hindus and Muslims go there in a procession.

They carry large pankhas or fans, decked with flowers. Together they visit a Muslim dargah and a Hindu temple.

Do not confuse it with the Qutub festival which is a modern music and dance festival. It was started by Delhi Tourism in 1993.

Qutub Minar, the tallest tower in India, is illuminated in the evening these days. In the garden complex, which shines under the night sky, dancers and musicians regale the audience.

Hill towns like Shimla and Mussoorie have their autumn fetes. Many people go there from the plains.

Ladakh holds a unique autumn festival. Ladakh is the northern-most part of India. So autumn comes there early. The festival is in September, lasting 15 days.

During the festival you see the Ladakhis singing and dancing in their colourful costumes. You also see their traditional arts and handicrafts.

The people of Ladakh are Buddhists. They have many old monasteries. In a way, going to Ladakh is like going back in time.

October has three major festivals. They are Durga Puja, Dussehra and Diwali. Each is gay and glittering in its own way. And full of religious fervour, too.

Usually Puja and
Dussehra fall around the
middle of, or in late,
October and Diwali in
November. This year all
these festivals fall in
October.

Before Dussehra comes Navratri, a nine-day festival in honour of Devi (Parvati). The tenth day is Vijayadashmi.

To Devi's worshippers, it is the day of Durga's victory over the buffalo demon, Mahishasura. Durga is one of the many forms of Devi.

Rama's devotees celebrate it as the day of his victory over Ravana, King of Lanka. Either way Vijayadashmi means the triumph of good over evil.

A few weeks before Durga Puja begin festival les. People buy new clothes and gifts. The Bengalis, who celebrate Puja with great fervour, spend a lot indeed.

Also weeks before starts the making of Durga's images. They are made of bamboo splinters, grass and clay. But they are so beautiful that they look life-like.

The images show Durga as a ten-armed (the number may be eight), charming woman. In each hand she bears a weapon and she rides a lion or a tiger. At her feet lies the bleeding demon, Mahishasura.

The images are set up in gaily lit pandals (large tents). The devout offer flowers and other gifts. They also sing and dance. Plays and other programmes add to the gaiety.

On Vijayadashmi day, the images are, amidst devotional music and dancing, carried in processions. They are immersed in a river or the sea.

Some women weep then. To them it is a time of parting. One legend has it that, after spending the Navratri days with her parents, the goddess is going back to her husband, Shiva.

While some men are making images of Durga, some others are working

on the effigies of Ravana. Also effigies of his brother Kumbhakarana and son Meghanada.

The effigies are towering images. As they are of warriors, they are moustached and have swords and shields in their hands. Ravana's effigy is tenheaded. Though made of bamboo and paper, the images look grand in their own way.

Rama's story is told in the Ramayana. It is one of the two great epics of India. The original is in Sanskrit. Later poets told the story in almost every Indian language.

Then there is the Ramlila. It is Rama's story enacted on stage. During Navratri a few scenes from the play are presented daily. People go there in thousands.

Unique is the Bharatiya Kala Kendra Ramlila in Delhi. On a three-part stage the entire epic is presented as a dancedrama within three hours.

Toys are a part of every festival. Some of the toys are the same at every festival. But some others are special for the occasion. Some of the Dussehra toys are its very own.

Several days before the festival, epic weapons—swords, spears, maces,

battle-axes, tridents and bows and arrows—are on sale. Children have a lot of fun with these cute and colourful weapons of reed, cardboard and paper.

For more fun there are wigs, beards, moustaches and a variety of masks,

Quite a contrast to these war-like toys are the dolls, images of gods and animals and miniature vessels that are lined up in steps by women and girls in Tamil Nadu. This is the Kollu display, put up during Navratri.

Before India became free, rajas and maharajas took a lot of interest in Dussehra celebrations. Their horses, elephants and phaetons took part in the pageants. And their palaces and temples were lit up.

The Mysore festivities were perhaps the best known for the royal pomp. People went there from far and near.

Another tourist draw is the Kulu Dussehra. In fact, it is different from the festival elsewhere. It begins on Vijayadashmi day and goes on for a week.

At the centre of its celebrations is an image of Rama as Raghunathji. To pay their respects to it come gods and goddesses from almost every village around.

Not the real deities, but their silver masks. They are brought on decorated palkis (palanquins) by singing and dancing villagers.

In most of the towns in the plains the burning of the effigies is the highlight of Dussehra.

The effigies stand, tall and majestic, in the middle of the mela ground. Around them are stalls, merry-go-rounds and other kinds of fun and games.

At sunset, boys dressed as Rama and Lakshmana, come in chariots, with drummers and devotees following. The brothers shoot arrows at the effigies.

At the same time, the effigies are set alight. Inside them are fixed crackers. Bang! Bang! they go as the flames engulf the titanic images. It is a deafening, but also dramatic, show.

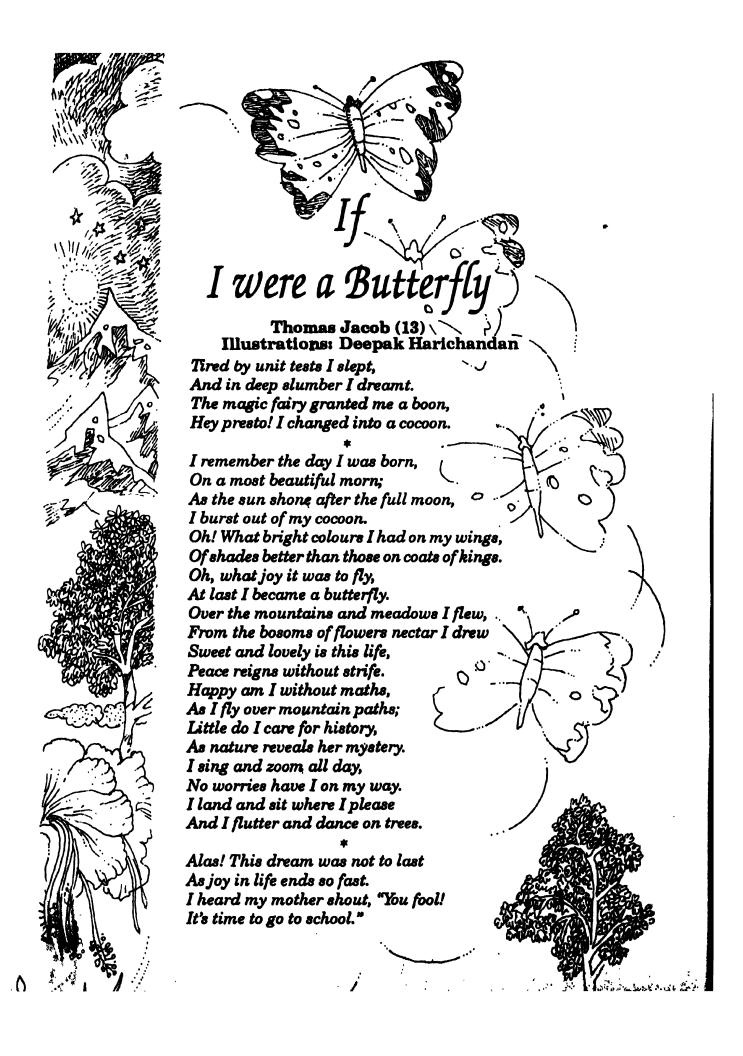
dil

The next day Bharata
Milap, the meeting of
Rama with his brother, is
staged. With that the
curtain falls on the
festival.

Curtain? Yes, for the moment. But after 20 days comes Diwali. It celebrates, with countless lamps and fireworks, Rama's return to Ayodhya.

About Diwali in November...





How to View the Solar Eclipse Safely

Text: Nirupama Raghavan Director, Nehru Planetarium

A total solar eclipse will take place on the morning of October 24, 1995. In India, the path of totality will pass through Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. It is only the second time in this century that the path of totality crosses the Indian sub-continent. Last time, on February 16, 1980, the general population had conflicting reports that reinforced their ancient fears of the effect of the eclipse. This was compounded by schools, colleges and offices being declared closed. Therefore, many citizens of this country missed a once in a lifetime opportunity to view the total eclipse. Those who did see it and have written to us, however, have it etched in their memory and are eager to view it again, every single one of them! Here's how you go about viewing this rare phenomenon safely. You need not 'miss' the solar eclipse on October 24, 1995.

Ninety-mine per cent of the sun's energy that reaches the earth's surface is in the form of light and heat. It is no accident that the eves of creatures on the earth are sensitive to either light or heat. The human eye—a delicate and complex organ—is sensitive to light radiation. It is designed to function over a wide range of light levels, the iris in front of the pupil, contracting at high light levels and opening out at low light levels, rather like the aperture of an automatic camera.

The tissues of the retina of the eye can, however, be

damaged if too much radiation falls on it. The limiting irradiance which causes detectable damage to the cells in the retina, is 2.7 x 104 watts per square metre. This amount of energy forms a permanent burn in the retina called a Thermal Lesion. The retina cells are completely destroyed and a blind area results. Such damages take place when the temperature of the photoreceptor cell rises 23°C above the 37°C of the normal living cell. This type of damage is caused by both the visible and the infrared radiation. On a clear day, if you look

directly at the sun for longer than 30 seconds this damage will occur. But we usually never look for this length of time, because it is painful.

Lesser amounts of irradiance still produce temporary loss of vision and perhaps a small permanent damage. This is called a Photochemical Lesion. This is induced by just a 2°C increase in the temperature of the cell, above normal. Such a damage arises from the retina absorbing excessive blue, violet and ultraviolet light that is transformed into heat. The limiting irradiance for this type of damage is approximately a thousand times lower than that for thermal lesions. In addition, the damage to the retina depends on how long the radiation is heating it. That is why gazing directly at the sun for more than a few seconds is dangerous at all times.

Eclipses cause eye injury not because harmful rays are emitted at that time, but simply because they tempt people to stare at the partially eclipsed sun and it is easy to stare at a dimmed sun.

Given below are the safest ways of enjoying a solar eclipse.

Partial Phase (All places in India will experience a partial eclipse.)
Projection methods

(i) Make a 5mm hole with a paper punch in a white card. Paste this card on a window facing east/south-east. During the morning hours, a small image of the sun will be formed on the opposite wall. Darken the room as much as possible for good contrast. You can watch the progress of the eclipse on this image. The larger the distance to the wall, the larger will be the mage size.

(ii) A brighter image can

be obtained by taping the punched card on a small mirror. Position the mirror on the window to reflect a spot of sunlight on the wall. The mirror will have to be adjusted as the sun appears to move across the sky. Practise for a few days before, at the same time as the eclipse, to get it just right. No one should look at the sun in the mirror. In order to aim the spot at a convenient place on the wall, you can construct a mount that can tilt the mirror up and down as well as rotate it about a vertical axis.

(iii) For group viewing, a woven mat (chattai) fixed on a frame projects many many images of the sun and the progress of the partial phase can be thus monitored.

(iv) A straw hat would serve a similar purpose.

Do not use

- 1. Overexposed photographic film
- 2. Overexposed colour film
 - 3. Smoked glasses
- 4. Neutral density gelatin filters

Welders glasses number 14 are safe, but many available in the market are not numbered and are spurious.

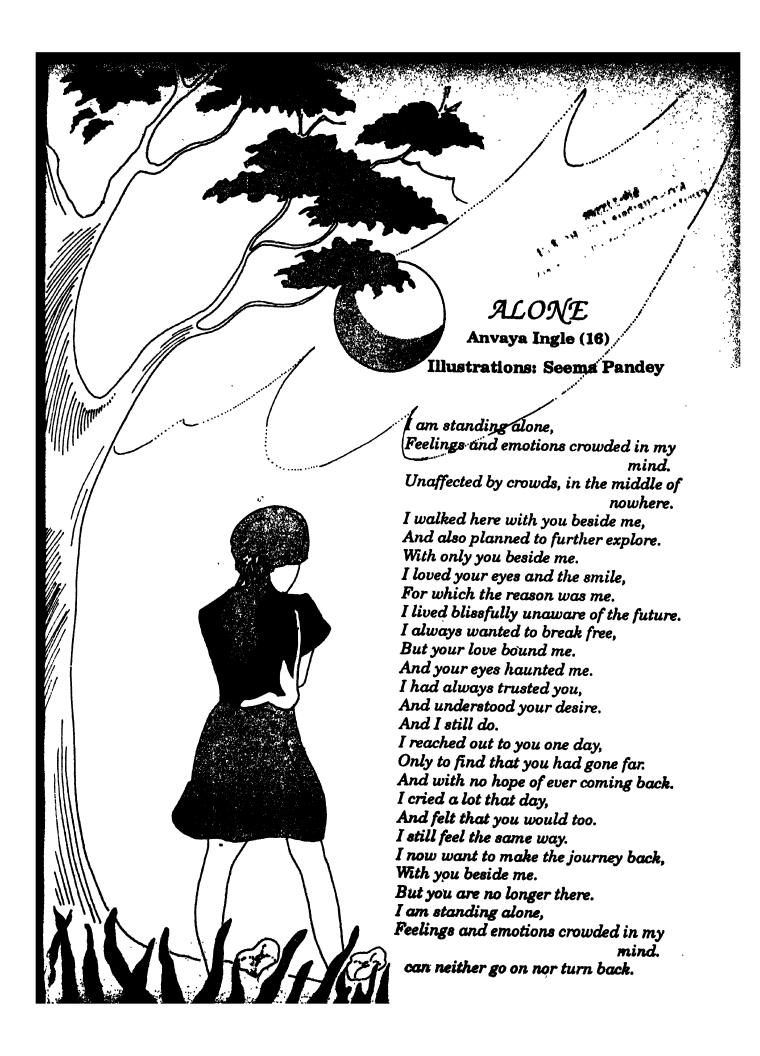
Experiments have shown that viewing the

sun reflected from coloured water (mixed with cowdung, turmeric powder) in a shallow dish for longer than 10 seconds causes watering and soreness of the eyes, the beginning stages of photochemical lesions. Since different people have different tolerances, this method is best avoided.

If you own a telescope or binoculars, project the image on a screen and view it. This is the only method that should be used if you have no solar filter.

Total Phase (Within 45 km belt along N. India).

It is entirely safe to view the total phase directly. You can monitor the progress of the eclipse by the projection method. As soon as the total phase begins, you view the same, directly. You must stop looking as soon as the totality ends. This is the time when you can injure your eye as the iris is fully open for the low light level and the full radiance of the sun peeping from behind the moon can enter it. Please check the length of totality for your location and count the seconds mentally. It takes one second to say "one steam engine"!





Story: Padmaja Menon

Illustrations: Beejee

"REAR rabbits, earn in thousands.

Breeder rabbits supplied.

Breed them in sheds, garages etc," read Mrs. Chandra. She frowned. 'How could you earn thousands by breeding rabbits?' she wondered.

"We buy;

Rabbit meat is best for diabetes, obesity etc." she read further.

'Oh, so that is it,' she thought.

Breed them, feed them and then sell them. Somewhat like a coultry farm. Not a bad dea. There was an unused shed in her backyard—why a backyard was perfect—she could do it. Money was always welcome, especially since she had two children to bring up, single-handed.

Mrs. Chandra taught in the school nearby and also sold vegetables that grew in her backyard to supplement her income. But with two growing children and their unending demands, her salary vanished pretty fast. Her'two darlings '—she mused, 'poor things. What luxury had she ever

been able to offer them? Of course they ate well she made sure they had good food—they also went to a good schoolbut good schools cost money. So it was that she could not afford very good clothes for them or send them on school excursions—or take them to restaurants or even buy them a TV. They went to Mala's house to watch television. Mala was a dear friend so it wasn't embarrassing. She sighed. Since her husband had left her. she had discovered an

inner strength to carry on. Thank God for small mercies! Like the house her. Mother had willed her. It wasn't a very big house but she could grow anything in the garden, the soil was so fertile. Mrs. Chandra only lacked the time. Besides which there were days she just wanted to put her feet up and relax. She had heard that you could earn money by growing mushrooms too... but she must experiment with those breeder rabbits first...

When Rattan and Rashmi returned from school, they were pleasantly surprised to find some cute rabbits hopping around the house.

"Ma, what is this?"
they called out and did
not look too happy when
they heard the reason
they were there.

"But Ma, how cruel! How can we sell them to be killed?" asked Rattan—the soft-heart.

"You don't get
emotionally involved
with them—I mean
don't look upon them as
pets, then you won't feel
so bad," said their
mother not sounding
very sure of herself.

Rashmi picked up one of the bunnies...its bright pink eyes stared back at her unblinkingly. It lifted its tiny paws and rubbed its nose. It s tail bobbed up and down.

"Oh Mom, he is a cute

fellow!" she whispered. But her mother's expression made her put it down quietly.

Even though they tried not to be, the children found themselves drawn irresistibly to the



animals. They fed them carrots, lettuce and any leftover food available. The rabbits grew nice and plump.

They also came to recognise the children and hopped up to them when they returned from school. Within a month baby rabbits appeared and the backyard was a delight to watch. Rashmi and Rattan even forgot to go to Mala Aunty's place to watch TV! She came over one day to inquire what had happened and lost her heart!

"Oh my, my...they are so cute. I am taking two home," she cried.

Mrs. Chandra did not have the heart to tell her the truth. The neighbourhood children were also always with the rabbits. Their house had begun to have a festive look. Mrs. Chandra realised that her children were very content. Their grades at school had also improved. She wondered... Rashmi looked at the calendar. It was the nineteenth. The buyer would be here any moment. Since their bunny litter had

increased. Ma was calculating how much money they would get. She said they could pay their first instalment for the TV. It was really a solid sum she would earn when the buver came. A tidy sum would be left over to buy a few good dresses for the children too. Rashmi and Rattan did not look as thrilled as she had hoped. And to tell the truth she also felt queasy. She looked out of the window. The baby rabbits hopped to and fro. The mothers had a few at the teat. There was a smug look about the mothers. Some babies were nibbling at carrots and a few. leftover lettuce leaves. Tomorrow all the babies would be gone...to be made into tasty tidbits. They would be adorning the tables of some family after being killed. skinned and chopped! All bloody and gory...she shuddered—oh god, how could she allow it to happen? She remembered Rattan and Rashmi's agonised face as they bid goodbye to the rabbits in the morning. They knew howmuch the extra

money meant to their mother. So they had not objected openly, but their silence had spoken volumes. Mrs. Chandra knew of their hurt but had no solution. She wanted to provide her children with a few basic luxuries and if in the process some creatures'babies died...should she alone care?

After all they were only a few rabbits. No, she should not let sentiment sway her reason. She looked again. The mother rabbits were sniffing lovingly at their offspring as they gambolled all over the backvard. 'Rabbits were real cute creatures.'she thought and quickly admonished herself. 'No. this kind of thinking wouldn't do... A bell pealed. She jumped. Who could it be? Oh, the rabbit man...'She looked at her rabbits again...

When the children returned they wondered why the rabbits were still in the backyard. Maybe that fellow had not come that day.

"Mom," they called,

"why haven't you sold

the rabbits?" they asked

picking up some and petting them.

Their Mom appeared at the kitchen door with a sheepish expression on her face. "I realised that rabbits are very nice creatures and decided not to sell them..." announced Mrs. Chandra.

Rattan and Rashmi jumped for joy and yelled at the top of their voices. They hugged their mother hard. Mala Aunty rushed over to find out what was wrong. The neighbourhout kids

came over... When the noise and bustle settled down, Rashmi whispered "Mom your TV?"

"My TV, I don't need one...it was for you!" exclaimed Mrs.
Chandra.

"We don't want one, we don't want one," yelled both of them.

"We love our rabbits more," they cried.

"Ok, ok, so be it...I think I can grow mushrooms. They don't make you cry!" said Mom, her eyes misty and her voice funny.

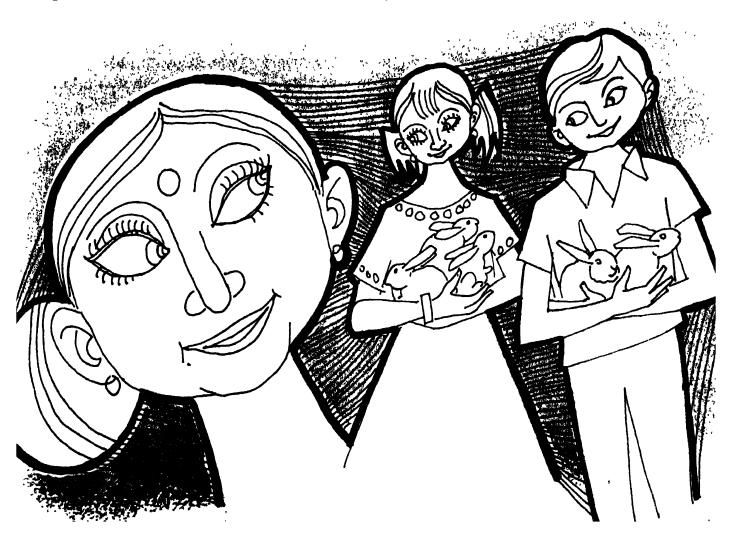
"Oh Ma, thank you, we

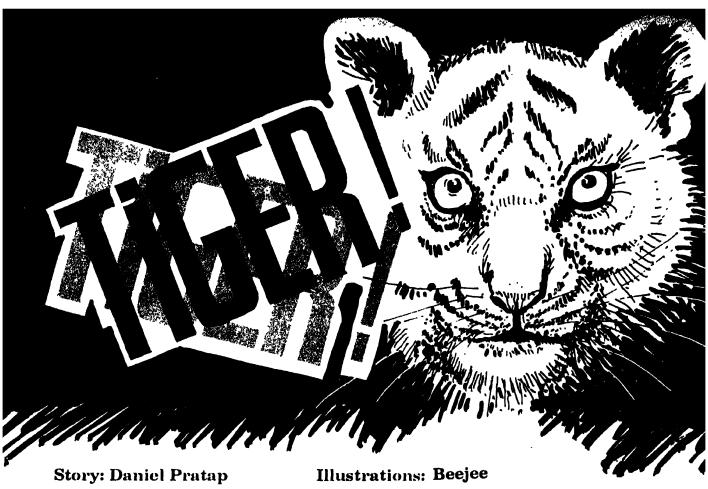
will all help you to grow them," promised the children.

The rabbits hopped up and down and Rattan hugged as many as he could hold.

Mala hugged Mrs. Chandra and said, "My TV is yours and as for money...it is here today—gone tomorrow...If your children are happy so are we.."

"Yes," said Mrs. Chandra, "Rabbits and children are such cute creatures!"





LIVE in a large, rambling house, just inside a dense forest. a tiger reserve, of which my father was the Chief Conservator till his death. I've spent all my life here; and am so used to the milieu that, despite all the roaring and bellowing, the shrieking and trumpeting from the various denizens of the jungle who come to drink at the small lake just half a kilometre away. it is home for me. I find it peaceful; and happily live here to pursue my career as a research botanist. since the forest abounds in exotic and scarce plant life.

I live alone, partly out of choics but mainly

because of Flash, my pet(!) tiger, who has spent every day of his four-year life with me. I had picked him up as a week-old, starving cub from near the poisoned carcass of his mother. Thanks to Flash, no servant is prepared to stay full time in the house. Friends and relatives also drastically curtailed their occasional visits after Flash was a vear old. A mixed blessing. as I was quite content to be left alone to pursue my research and to while away my spare time in Flash's company. Besides, I had my books and the radio, both being far better company than fellow human beings.

Not that passing time was ever a problem. Having Flash was a fulltime job; feeding him, ensuring that he got enough exercise, playing with him. Having literally grown up under my shadow, and not having any idea of his natural heritage, Flash was more like a pet dog: docile, obedient and very gentle when in a playful mood. Like most pets, he craved attention-mine-and was quite content to loll near my chair while I worked, provided I paid some attention to him off and on by talking to him or by gently tweaking his ears from time to time. He would then emit a low

growl of appreciation, akin to the purring of a cat.

At times he could be stubborn, like a recalcitrant child, and would ignore my calling him, particularly if it meant going back to his cage. He would just stand, looking up at me through his blazing, green eyes, with his tail swishing, but would not move. I would then have to give him a few hard whacks on his rump, catch him by the scruff of his neck and pull him along to his cage. Mercifully, this happened rarely.

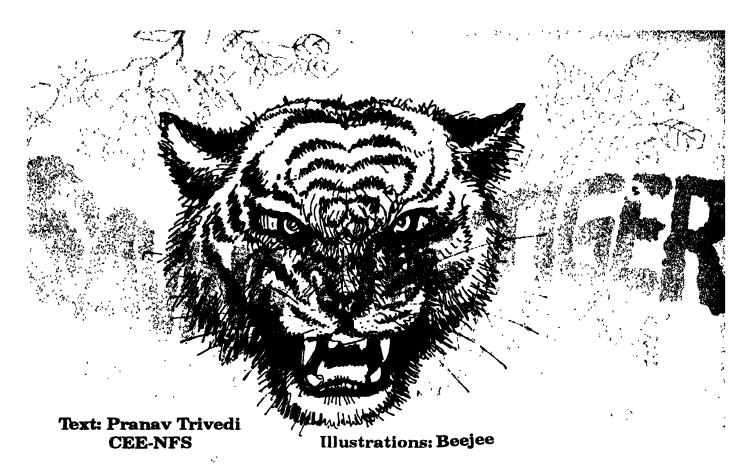
The evenings were the best part of the day. Pleasantly tired after a full day's work, often productive, I would relax in my favourite chair with a drink and pore over the day's notes or be engrossed in a book. The front door would be left open to admit the cool breeze and the varied sounds of the jungle at dusk.

One evening, so occupied, I looked up from my notes to see, to my utter dismay, Flash before me, staring at me with his tail swishing furiously. "Oh, no!" I said to myself, "I have again forgotten to put him inside. I hope he comes quietly." As I was at

a most interesting stage in my novel (I read thrillers for relaxation), I got up impatiently, held him by the scruff of his neck and pulled him towards his cage. While doing so, I spoke to him soothingly in order to ensure that at the last moment he wouldn't be stubborn and refuse to go in. As we came to the cage, I looked up in order to hold the door open. And what do I see? The door of the cage was firmly closed and bolted with Flash inside the cage, staring at me with a puzzled expression in his eyes...







IGER—the princely predator of the Indian jungle has been living with the threat of extermination from the subcontinent. India had a sizeable population of tigers at the end of the previous century. This population, however, kept dwindling due to burgeoning anthropogenic pressures in terms of habitat destruction and killing of tigers. In the late sixties, a countrywide census brought the revelation that there were less than 2,000 tigers left in India. By this time, out of the eight subspecies of tigers, the Caspian tiger was extinct, the Sumatran and Bali tiger were on the verge of extinction, and

the rest were similarly threatened. Due to the large extent of habitat and bright hopes for recovery, the Indian tiger received much international attention. It was due to the sincere efforts of some enlightened naturalists of India and a prompt response from the Indian Government and WWF-International, in administrative and financial sectors, which made 'Project Tiger' a reality in 1973.

It has been over twenty years since 'Project Tiger' came into existence. Its importance as a milestone in the history of wildlife conservation is undisputed. But this project, which initially showed

remarkable progress, seems to be failing in achieving the objectives set in 1973.

To begin with, nine Tiger Reserves (TR) were set up under the project. The number has risen to twenty-one now and the area covered has also increased considerably. The habitat and prey population are recovering steadily and the number of tigers, too, is supposed to have risen from 2,000 to nearly 4,000 by late '80s. It appeared as though the project would be the most striking example of the success stories of conservation. when the big blow came... a systematic slaughter of tigers in Ranthambhor TR



came to light; Manas, Corbett and Kanha were gripped by extremist invasions causing disturbances to the habitat and fauna: man-eating cases continue to rise in Dudhwa and the Sunderbans, and the final blow came when the Government of Maharashtra expressed its desire to denotify parts of Melghat TR.

The project which had a financial backing of nearly 1 million US\$ was turning into a disaster. It came as a shock to most conservationists the world over.

As is generally known, the success of any project depends on how well it is implemented, monitored and evaluated. Most TRs

created under the project are like tiny islands in the vast sea of human population. Burgeoning human population on the periphery and within these TRs puts more pressure on the habitat and its denizens. The mere creation of TRs was not as important as their management and monitoring. A five-yearly census is by no standards a good technique of assessment. The absence of regular monitoring was responsible for the embarrassing situation that project personnel found themselves in, for painting a rosy picture that was totally at variance with reality.

Apart from lack of monitoring, the project

suffered from lack of popular support, a growing man-animal conflict which resulted from cattle-lifting or killing of humans by tigers, poaching, naxalite intrusions, commercial losses from the project, and shifting of the responsibility of managing the TRs from central to state Governments.

Instead of presenting the true situation, it is suspected that the manipulation of census results helped to create the illusion of a successful project.

But the situation is not beyond repair. First of all, a thorough reassessment of the project needs to be done. A strategy of managing all the TRs following certain guidelines should be carved out. A pragmatic approach to managing TRs that involves participatory management and ecodevelopment should be considered.

It has long been realised that no conservation project can become a reality unless people support it or participate in its execution. This fact was more or less completely ignored by 'Project Tiger'. The first step in this direction should be the creation of manager ment plans for all the TRs.

Unfortunately, in India, forest officials who are just administrators make management plans. A management plan should involve the local people, NGOs, eminent naturalists, wildlife scientists and, if possible, local MLAs too. If people are involved in drawing up plans and executing them, more cooperation can be expected from them.

Generally, Protected Area (PA) management plans do not take into account the socio-economic factors prevailing in and around PAs. Population control, alternative energy sources, employment generation and the provision of essential facilities will help reduce the burden on TR resources to a greater extent. Arranging for the relocation of villages situated inside the TRs may not be the ultimate solution; instead it may give rise to bigger problems.

The terms on which compensation for the loss of livestock and human life is made needs to be carefully prepared. Unless compensation cases are handled on a priority basis, there will be considerable local resentment against the project.

Examples of poaching of tigers in Ranthambhor and extremist intrusions in Manas indicate the lack of adequate protection. A well-equipped staff for the protection of TRs must be the first priority of Project Tiger authorities. Maximum involvement of local people is desirable in this regard. It will serve the purposes of protection and employment generation. Unless we protect the wilderness of TRs vigorously, it will be difficult to contemplate the survival of the tiger. Manas could be offered a special task force from the Indian army to enhance protection of the habitat.

As unplanned and uncontrolled tourism could have a disastrous impact on TRs, it is essential that an eco-tourism policy be worked out and implemented. This will include visitor classification along with the provision of interpretation facilities. Training and involvement of local people in the development of tourist facilities is a must. The income generated from eco-tourism can be channelized for improving TR management. This earning will compensate for the loss of income due to the termination of logging practices. Special encouragement to school and college students to visit these TRs will generate support for the tiger and its reserves.

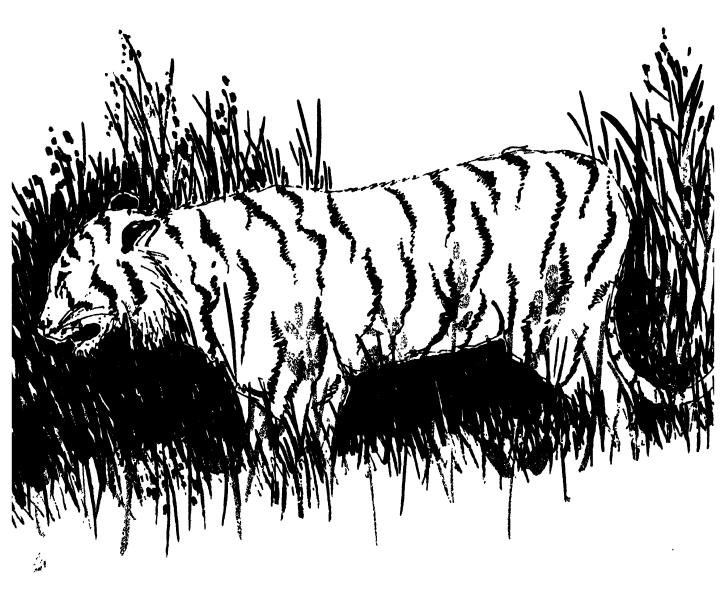
At present, there is little interest in the regular monitoring of most TRs. A permanent research and monitoring staff is ideal, but if this is not possible, local universities and institutions should be encouraged to conduct research in TRs. The presence of people may help curb illegal activities to a greater extent. An unbiased, threeyearly census of tigers, other carnivores and their prey may prove useful.

Identification of potential key TRs which are larger than 1,500 sq. km. should be made based on their forest cover, remote location and healthy habitat conditions. These TRs should then receive higher inputs in terms of management. This is because larger reserves hold more scope for harbouring viable populations of tiger and its prey than smaller reserves. Sunderbans, Bandipur-

Mudumalai-Nagarhole complex, Manas, Corbett, Kanha, Periyar, Melghat, Kalakkad-Mundanthurai complex, and Namdapha are some examples of potentially key TRs.

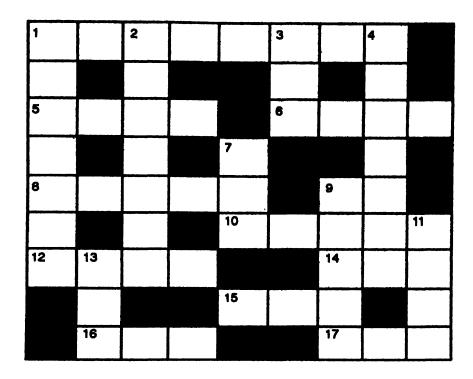
Media campaigns should be constantly carried out to support the project and create awareness regarding it. This will generate funds and goodwill for the conservation of the tiger in its natural surroundings.

Considering all the factors that operate in the process of wildlife conservation, saving the tiger in its natural habitat can be a reality if immediate initiatives are taken. Indian jungles will be charmless if we lose this majestic apex predator, like we lost the cheetah, agile hunter of the plains. An ambitious initiative like 'Project Tiger' does not deserve a tragic end.



CROSSQUIZ

Kamala Rajan



CLUES

Across

- 1) This wise Greek was forced to drink hemlock (8)
 - 5) Yellow of an egg (4)
- 6) Cherapunji receives this highest fall (4)
 - 8) Fat, corpulent (5)
- 9) In, by, on; a preposition (2)
 - 10) White heron (5)
 - 12) Eager, sharp (4)
- 14) Much ____ about nothing; storm in a tea-

- 15) Sphere, globe (3)
- 16) The room in your school for chemical experiments (3)
- 17) Weep with sharp indrawn breath (3)

Down

- 1) The greedy Jew claiming a pound of flesh (7)
- 2) Institution of higher learning, following school (7)
- 3) Dark, thick liquid

used in making roads (3)

- 4) Bombastic or artificial literary style (7)
- 7) It lives in an apiary (3)
- 9) The nationals from Saudi Arabia (5)
- 11) Monument over a grave (4) 13) A slippery
- sea-creature (3)



The tigress would sniff the night air and teach her baby how to stalk prey. She would use every bit of cover, whether a bush or a rock or a tree, to hide her body and step so carefully that not a twig would crack or leaf rustle. Silent as a ghost she would go. The cub would imitate her every move as he followed her footsteps, stepping where she stepped, looking where she looked and doing all that she did. It was a game for him, but in this way he learnt the vital art of stalking, so important to his survival.

One night, the mother and the cub were on a hunt. The sky was clear and starry and there was a crescent of a moon to just light up the way. The tigress walked ahead and the cub followed close on her heels..

The tigress was intent on a kill and all her senses were attuned to locate a prey; which was perhaps why she missed the tiger that was slinking silently towards them through the bushes.

Suddenly there was an ear-splitting roar as the tiger launched himself on the cub. On hearing the roar, the tigress reacted instantly, realising the seriousness of the situa-

tion. She nimbly turned herself to put the cub behind her and stood up on her hind legs with her outstretched forepaws clawing the air. Blood-curdling roars issued from her open mouth.

The tiger checked his jump and fell a few feet before the tigress. He snarled angrily at her and tried to manoeuvre himself behind her. But the tigress held her ground and swiped at the tiger with her massive paws.

tiger decided that discretion was the better part of valour and bounded away to safety, with the tigress in hot pursuit. She chased him a good distance away and then returned to where she had left the cub.

tiger winced in pain and

injury. Taking advantage

of his momentary distrac-

tion, the tigress rushed at

his throat and gave him a

It was then that the

nip behind the ear.

turned to avoid further



CHILDREN'S WORLD



But the cub was nowhere in sight. The sudden apparition of the roaring tiger had so terrified his little heart that he had bolted headlong into the night, crashing into bushes and falling over blades of grass. He kept up his mad rush till he entered the grassy plain where the going became easy and he raced ahead unthinkingly, wanting to get as far away from the noisy scene behind him.

A herd of chital was resting in the plain after the day's grazing, placidly chewing cud. Some relaxed on the ground while others stood about in small groups. A mother chital and her fawn lay by themselves a little away from the herd, their eyes

half closed in sleep.

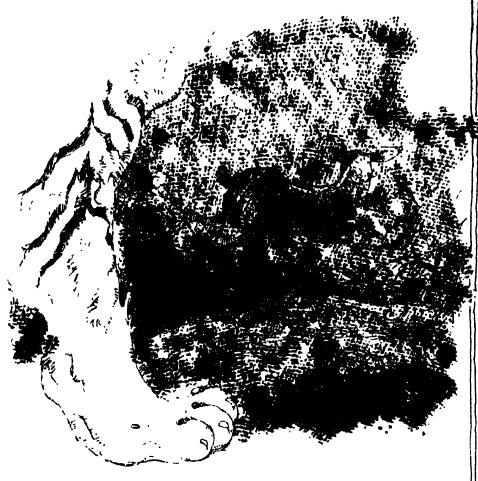
It was the fawn who first heard the rustling made by the fleeing cub. She opened her eyes and saw the bushes shaking and knew that something was heading towards them at breakneck speed. She could not see what it was, not in that starry darkness.

Of all deer, chital are the most curious and like to investigate any odd sound or sight. The fawn, being little, was more curious than an average chital, which is to say that she was very curious. The fawn decided to investigate the strange sound and tip-toed towards the rushing cub.

The two ran into each other a moment later, the cub throwing the fawn on her haunches as he collided with her in his haste.

It is difficult to say which of the two was more startled. For the cub it was the first encounter with his future prey. For the fawn it was the first brush with the king of the jungle. The two eyed each other suspiciously, each too afraid to approach the other.

It was the fawn who took the first step. She inched towards the little, striped, fluffy creature and timidly sniffed at his head. The cub spat at the approaching fawn in terror and tried to swipe at her with his tiny paws. The fawn drew back a little and looked down at the ill-tempered creature before her.



The cub was exhausted after his long rush and was all but winded. He sat there on his haunches stupidly and panted, bothering little about the fawn standing before him.

The fawn regained her courage and once again moved towards the cub and sniffed him. The cub ignored her. The fawn then proceeded to lick the cub's head and pawed him with the tip of her hoof.

This innocent play between the young of the prey and the predator went on for a while, when, suddenly, there was a loud roar of the tigress coming in search of her lost cub. The chital sprang to their feet and were away like the wind, the fawn abreast of the fastest chital of the herd.

The cub stood alone on the vast plain, slightly disappointed by the sudden disappearance of his unlikely playmate, but he was glad to see his mother. The two now once again took up their rudely interrupted hunt and walked in single file into the starlit night.

A PERFECT WORLD

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (10)

Environmental pollution, extinction of animals War and bloodshed, destroying life Is this what God destined the world to be?

Starving beggars and homeless children
The difference created between blacks and whites
Sounds just too horrifying to me

A world without worries,
a world without cares
Is only available
in my dreams
Why is mankind so selfish,
full of greed
Caring only for his well-

full of greed
Caring only for his wellbeing and his own
possessions
It is too shocking, indeed
The rich celebrate and the
poor have to beg
This disturbed world must
change some day
It just can't go on in this
terrible way.



OUR LAIRD'S A LASSIE - PART 6

MENT MORNING ...

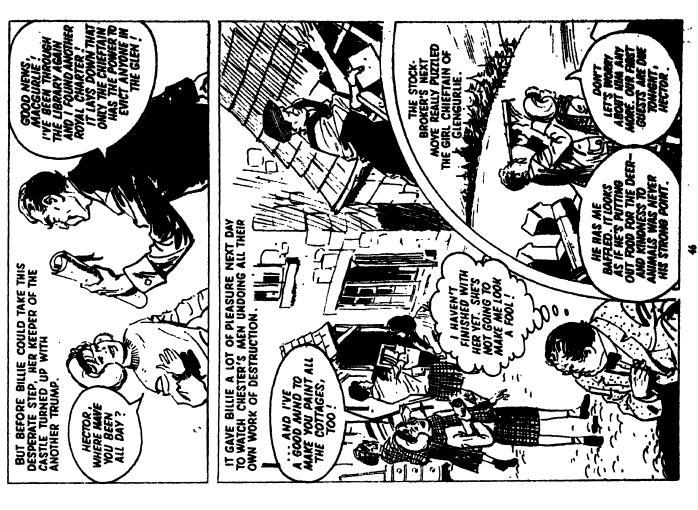
WHAT-WHAT'S HAPPENING?

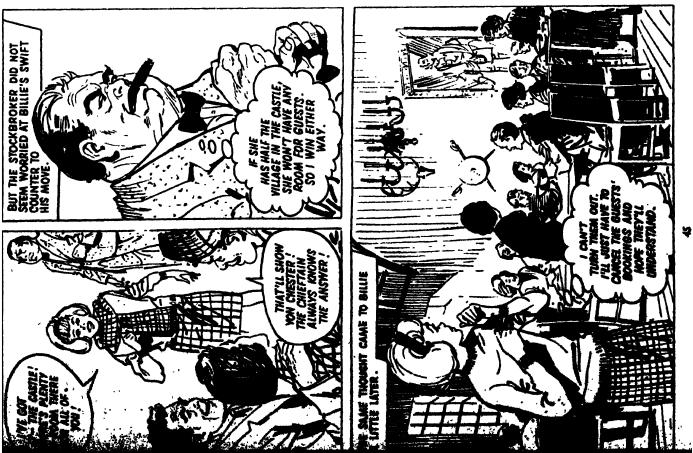


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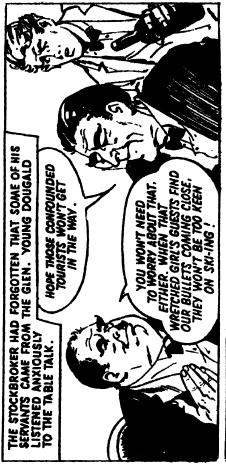






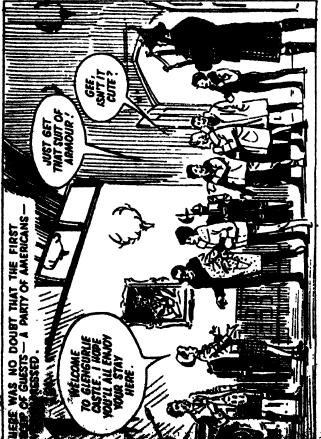








YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN, MRS. VANDERVELL

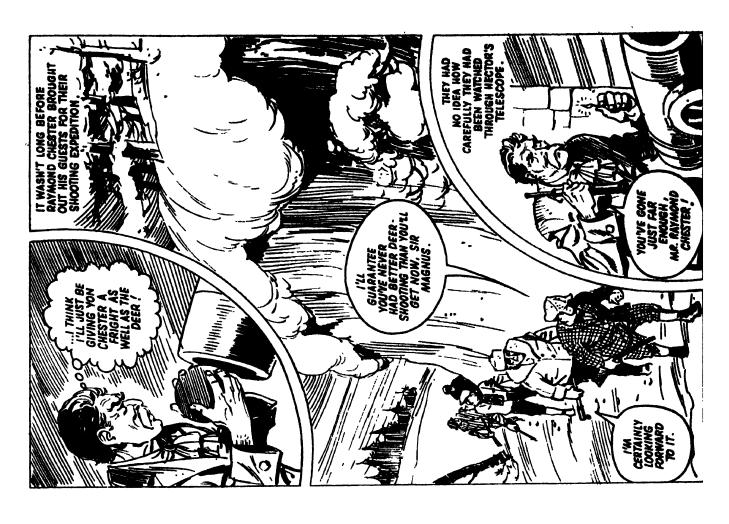


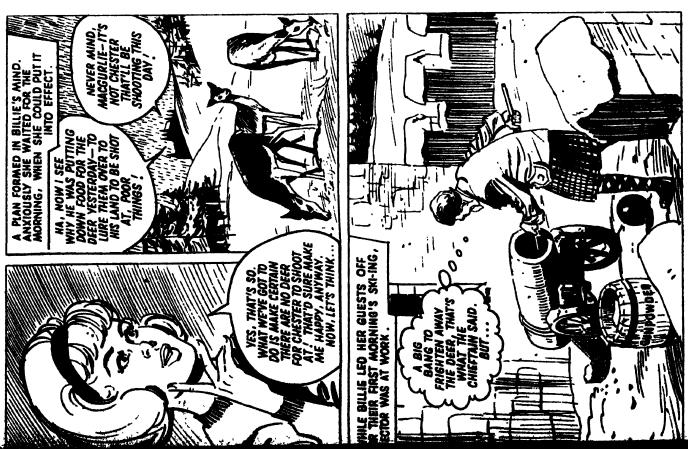


MUST FIND IT A PRETTY BIG RESPONSIBILITY BEING CHIEF-TAIN.

SAY, YOU









Story: Maya S. Achar

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

RS. KINI shut the door, and turned towards the three children, a grim look on her face. "Well, what answer do you have to that?" she asked them.

Nikhil, his sister, Neena, and their cousin, Rohan, looked at each other, but no one replied.

"I'm waiting," said
Mrs. Kini. "What excuse
do you have for not allowing those little children to
play at the swings, and
occupying them the entire
evening?"

The children stared sullerly at her.

allow as to play cricket on

the open ground, or badminton," said Rohan finally. "So why should we allow others to play?"

"Oh, I see," said
Mrs. Kini. "So, this is
mere revenge! Older
bullies don't allow you to
play, so, in turn, you
become bullies and don't
allow the little ones.
Wonderful!"

"Why should we be the ones who are kind? No one is kind to us," said Nikhil defiantly.

His mother looked at him angrily. "I have received this complaint about you several times before, and I've tried to explain things to you," she said. "Do you know what those little children call you? The three terrors!' Yes, you too, Neena. You are none of you so small that you do not know the meaning of sharing."

She took a deep breath. "Sit down," she said quietly. "I see that I must have a talk with you again. For the last time. After this, your father will deal with you."

"We're in for a lecture," muttered Rohan to himself, but sat down all the same.

They listened quietly to Mrs. Kini talk. They'd heard it all before—but what was the use? People

only said that if you did a good turn or helped someone, you'd also be helped in return. Nothing like that ever happened, except in films and stories. But it was no use arguing with adults. It was better to listen quietly and then forget about it.

That evening Rohan went to the garden all by himself. Nikhil and Neena had gone out with their parents, and Rohan was bored.

He sat on the only jhoola in the children's garden, immersed in thought. An uncle from Australia had sent him a huge plastic kite, and he was longing to try it out. It was the first time he had seen such a kite. But he needed his father's help to assemble it, and his father was away on tour.

How wonderful that kite was! How colourful! Its tail was.....

"Can I sit on the jhoola for some time?" asked a voice near him, and Rohan looked up with a start.

A small boy, neatly dressed, was standing near him. He must have been about four years old. Rohan had never seen him before. Perhaps he was new in their colony.

"No, you can't," he said shortly.

"Why can't I? Please!
Mummy doesn't want me
at home—and I don't
know what to do!"

Rohan looked at the boy's tear-filled eyes, his attention arrested.

"Don't cry! You're a boy, and boys don't cry," he said scornfully. "What's your name?"

"Gurudas," said the little boy, rubbing his eyes fiercely, and trying to control his tears.

"Why doesn't your mother want you at home?"



"Well, we've just shifted from Sholapur, and Mum's arranging the furniture. She spanked me and shouted at me for getting in the way."

Rohan felt a twinge of sympathy for him. How often adults had sent him out of the house for the very same reason! He knew all about things like 'getting in the way' and being naughty'. And of course, about spankings!

"I miss my cat, Tommy, too. We left him behind in Sholapur," said Gurudas, hurriedly brushing away some more tears.

Rohan, who loved animals, knew exactly how he felt. He felt even more sympathetic towards the boy. Normally, he would never have thought of getting up and giving him his place, but suddenly his aunt's words came to his mind, and he felt like testing them. He looked around. No one must see him giving up the jhoola to a small boy, or they would tease him for getting 'soft'.

"Sit," he said, preparing to go away.

"Won't you talk to me?"

evelsked Gurudas, in a small

Trice, holding Rohan's

sulle nd. "I have no friends

"Trice, and I like you."

allow tohan stopped in his

To dia

tracks. No small child had ever said that to him before—he was always shouted at by elders, and looked upon as a bully by the smaller children. Most of them feared him or disliked him, but no one had said they liked him! At least, he could not remember if they had.

He turned round slowly and looked at Gurudas. He was having trouble pushing the *jhoola*. Rohan pushed it gently for him. The little boy kept talking all the time.

"Is it six o'clock?

Mummy said to come back at six," he said finally.
"You come home with me.
I want Mummy to see you."

Rohan objected; but his little friend wouldn't listen. Somehow, feeling curious about the small boy who seemed so mature, Rohan went with him. Besides, there was nothing else for him to do.

"So here you are, Guru," said his mother smiling.
"Now go see your room.
It's all set."

"Yes, Mum, but this is my new friend, Rohan."

His mother looked pleased. "I'm glad you've found a friend," she said. She looked at Rohan. "He's been miserable since yesterday. This is the first time there's been a smile on his face."

"Where's Dad, Mum?" asked Guru.

His mother sighed. "In the bedroom. He's found some old things, and he's busy looking at them."

The boys went inside. To Rohan's intense surprise, Guru's father was seated on the floor, surrounded by various colourful looking things. The room was terribly untidy.

"See, Guru, these are my kites," said his father. "Kite flying was one of my hobbies. I couldn't fly these kites in our old house. But now, with this lovely lawn, large terrace and such a lot of open space, I can once again enjoy my hobby." He smiled. "And who's this young man with you?"

"He's Rohan, my new friend," said Guru proudly. "He pushed my jhoola today."

But Rohan was not listening. He was looking entranced at the multi-coloured kites spread all around the room. There were paper kites, and polyester kites; ordinary ones and decorative ones; black ones and multicoloured ones; ones with a tail, and ones without. The room was

full of them.

"Uncle, are all these yours?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes. I didn't have the heart to throw them away, so I brought them here. Guru can fly them when he's a little older. At the moment he's just not interested."

"Uncle, I too have just got a new kite, but I do not know how to fly it," said Rohan hesitantly. "It has to be assembled, but I cannot understand the instructions."

Guru's father looked at him. "But your father....?"

"He's not interested in such things," said Rohan unhappily. "And anyway, he's away on a month long tour at the moment."

"If you wish, you can bring it to me tomorrow evening," said Guru's father gently. "I'm on leave till the end of this week. We can not only fix yours, we can try out some of these too. How does that sound to you?"

"Yes, oh yes," said Rohan joyfully. "Can I have a look at some of these?"

Rohan spent a happy half an hour examining the kites on the floor. As he walked home, he felt terribly excited. He had asked permission to bring



Nikhil and Neena too the following day. If Guru had not taken him home, he would never have got this opportunity.

'But Guru took you home only because you were kind to him and helped him on the jhoola,' said a small voice in his head, and Rohan stopped dead in his tracks.

Was that what Aunt had meant when she said that if you did one good turn, you would receive something in return, maybe not immediately, but at some time or

the other?

It that was really true—well, it looked as if being kind and good was very very rewarding! He would certainly have to think about it!

He walked on, a thoughtful look on his face. Maybe, he thought, there was actually some truth in Aunt's words, or why else would Guru's father have been so kind to him?

Maybe, it would help, if he was kind. He wondered if Nikhil would think so too.

Carios of Otories

Yamunotri Yatra
By Sheela Sharma
Illustrated by Raj
Shekhar Bose
Price: Rs. 20.00
Tales from Far and
Near
Illustrated by Tapas
Guha
Price: Rs. 20.00
Both published by
Madhuban Educational
Books

For those of us interested in seeing the world, the next best thing to undertaking such journeys would be, perhaps, reading a well-written travel account. A good travelogue, however short. to one's mind, should not only vividly, graphically describe how the destination was reached but also the sights and sounds and people and nature—the whole experience of the traveller on the way.

On all these counts
Sheela Sharma's
Yamunotri Yatra falls a
little flat. The book begins
suddenly without any
introduction to the characters. The reader is left to
imagine for himself how
Gayatri, Uday and their

uncle look. Gayatri and Uday who accompany their uncle to Yamunotri, fail to make an impression.

The book ends as abruptly as it began.

All this is not to say that there is nothing of value in these pages.

There is information to be had from this book—about the Yamuna, the people and places en route to Yamunotri, the local flora and fauna and the rituals carried out at Yamunotri.

If the author has forgotten to describe and build up her characters. the illustrator does not leave the reader with a happy impression of them either. Very poorly done, the illustrations neither enliven the text nor do they give any additional information. The uncle, in the illustration on page 57, looks very different from the uncle on other pages. On page 57 the uncle has black hair while in all others he has been shown with white hair. The cover depicting a barren landscape and something akin to a

trickle of water can hardly be expected to attract readers.

Most of the stories in Tales from Far and Near have been heard many a time. Thus you have how Robin Hood Meets Friar Tuck'. 'The Story of Eklavya' cutting off his right thumb as gurudakshina, Mrs. Turtle's trick to prevent Brer Soungoula from eating her jack-fruit in 'Brer Soungoula and the Jack-Fruit'. Yudhishtira's wise answers to the Yaksha's question at The Magic Pool', an incident in the life of 'Jim Corbett'. Horatius's brave stand in 'How Horatius Held the Bridge', the role of Hopeful's pigeons in The Diamond Mines', how Hippomenes is able to run faster than 'Atlanta the Runner', Panna's quick wit in 'The Shadow', the brahmin's escape from "The Tiger', and, finally, a battle in 'Ulysses and the One-Eyed Cyclops'.

A humdrum collection of stories.

Bhavana Nair

'Naman' My Book of Prayers Published by Madhuban Educational Books Price Rs. 18.00

With an aim to build in children a 'reverence for our ancient culture' ... 'a true affection in all relationships, inculcate... personal discipline and a true spirit of leadership... through the elevating medium of PRAYER', Madhuban has brought out a collection of prayers representing all religions followed in India. Most of them are carried in the original with simple translations in English so as to enable children to understand what they are saying. The book also includes bhajans and inspirational songs in Hindi. Visually appealing and soothing, the book is a recommended acquisition.

Sudha Sanjeev

The Great Lottery
Scandal and other
Stories
Illustrated by
Pushp Katju
Published by
Madhuban Educational
Books
Price: Rs. 25.00

This collection of ten everyday stories about events that can happen to every boy or girl, are written by the members of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children. The characters in the stories are ordinary children, the only difference being that they are curious 'nosey parkers', who question, are concerned and aware about the happenings around them.

Take Neeta of 'The Abandoned Farmhouse'. If she had not been a 'nosey parker', the gang of bank robbers who aid terrorists would not have been caught. Or if Atul of 'Birdgame' had not made it his business to worry about a couple of partridges, an illegal gambling den which uses birds for fighting, would not have been caught. Even John and Arvind of 'Mystery of the Red Pens' would not have managed to bust a group which leaks out Board examination question papers, if they had not gone to investigate Flash Gordon (the flashing light at night).

But not all stories are about busting gangs.

Some like 'The Broken Nibs Mystery' and 'Mystery of the Haunted House', are about everyday happenings, which are solved by using a bit of common sense.

Then there are those characters who get drawn into a mystery, willy-nilly, like Benu of 'Caught Unawares' and Bunty and Kris of 'Imperfect Vase'. The last mentioned is a different type of story from the rest and quite enjoyable. Another story written in a lighter vein is 'Ghost at Victoria Park'.

The stories, The Missing Denarius' and The Great Lottery Scandal' deal with the theme of cheating in different situations.

The stories are all told simply and would be enjoyed by the 10-12 age group.

There is one jarring note, however. The illustrations, especially the cover, are appalling. Children get put off by such illustrations. A little care in this department could have made the book complete in all respects.

Thangamani

Caught Red-Handed By Kamlesh Mohindra Illustrations by Vishwajyoti Ghosh Published by Madhuban Educational Books Price Rs.20.00

Not jewels or antiques, the gangsters this time are after a very different set of goods—warm and alive, four-legged and friendly, and—most importantly black. This makes the book different from the run-ofthe-mill mysteries.

The setting, too, is different—a West African town. The people in the book are from India, Bangladesh, Germany, England, and, of course, West Africa.

Ten-year-old Mona from Delhi is in West Africa because her father is posted there. She adores animals, especially dogs. Mona is rather attached to her maid, Grace, a tribal woman. But while Mona adores animals, Grace clearly does not.

The story begins with Mona puzzled and unhappy over Grace's aversion to dogs. It builds up with Mona being frightened by arguments that Grace seems to have with a rough-looking man speaking her own tongue. Then plaintive groans come out of sacks and black dogs disappear all over the town. Grace develops a liking for dogs in spite of the tribal taboo she has told Mona about.

vanishes one

day—the same day as a dachshund in the neighbourhood does. Mona and her friends, Cindy especially, reason it all out. Grace is part of the gang kidnapping black dogs. With the help of the police, Grace and the other members of the gang are caught. Caught red-handed.

This book will make a pleasant enough present for a child around ten or eleven. But how good is it as an educational book?

It should be able to help

children (of Mona's age) sharpen their powers of reasoning. There is a glossary ('Check them out') which explains words such as 'pikin', 'rasgullas', 'oyebo' and 'Gayatri mantra'. But the book is not free from grammatical errors. Sadder still, is the lack of local details which could have made the book more informative and convincing. That would have been more relevant than lunches and school concerts.

Dipavali Debroy

2 Well of Marine

Mili Bhardwaj (14)

I would like to fly and go,
Where the tallest of all trees grow.
Where below the blue sky,
The most enchanted forests lie.
Where forests are thick and green,
And all types of strange animals are seen.
With no bells and voices and not even

For ages where no one ever hums.
Where no hunter can build a hut
By a garden full of primroses and treesfull
of nuts.

Where basks the dangerous crocodile,
As I look up, I see him smile.
Where in jungles far and near,
Tiger roars you can hear.
Where the thick green shade beats the heat,
And there is a green carpet under my feet.
The pink flamingo sweetly sings,
And hawks flap about on their wings.
Everything appears dead
As gently falls the night.
But the dreamland is still alive
With the silvery fishes swimming in the
moonlight.

١

T was just one of those days, when one feels low and depressed for no particular reason.

Sailesh was a 14-yearold, with one younger sister, loving parents and a cute dog as a pet. There were no apparent reasons for him to feel depressed.

But according to him there were many. First and foremost, he wore specs; it was a terrible burden on him. Secondly, he wasn't all that bright like Vikram or Uday, the toppers in his class. Nor was he a hero of the school football team like Vijay Chopra, the Number 1 of the school. His looks were just average, nothing to make him stand out, unlike Amit Seth the 6-foot, fair boy. He was an Aurangzeb where music was concerned and he couldn't dance for nuts.

Looks average, height average, average in studies and sports. Yes, that's what he was—just an average person. And not many people look up to an average person.

At this moment he was feeling so low and restless that he could no longer stay at home. "I am going for a walk, Mummy," said Sailesh.

"Come back soon, it's

already dark," called out his mother.

It was around 7 o'clock in the evening. All the children had gone back home and, strangely, ther were not many people on the road. But Sailesh was too involved in his thoughts to notice this. Suddenly, there was a loud rumbling of clouds and down came big droplets of rain, awakening Sailesh from his thoughts He then realized that he had come a long way from home and it was dark and raining. Hurriedly he turned back and started running home.

It was when he was



passing the park that Sailesh thought he heard someone shout "Help", "Help".

It was dark, it was raining, it was terribly quiet and he was all alone in the lane. 'God! what should I do? I know I heard someone cry for help, but what can I do, a skinny, be spectacled boy of 14? It would be silly if I go and challenge a bunch of goons alone.'

There was Sailesh standing in pouring rain under a streetlight thinking "to help or not to help", when, again, he heard a girl's painful scream, "Help... he..lp..."

Sailesh jumped into a nearby bush and tried to get a glimpse of what was going on. He couldn't see much as it was dark and the rain was still heavy, but he could see an outline of two huge men, throttling this tiny girl. One was holding the girl and the other was threatening her with a knife. One man kept saying, "Tell me... tell me... or I will kill you..." The little girl was drenched half in tears and half in rain.

'God! what can I do? How can I help.' As Sailesh was thinking, there was a flash of lightning and a terrible roll of



thunder... and an idea struck Sailesh. Yes, there was one thing he was good at... he had been punished a couple of times for doing that... yes... he could whistle.

"Phree... phree...!"
Sailesh whistled from behind the bush.

The two rogues, thinking it was the park watchman, fled, leaving the little girl sobbing. After a while, making sure the men had left, Sailesh came from behind the bush and took the little girl home.

At home, Sailesh's mother told him that the girl was their maid's daughter. His parents were proud of him, his

sister was hysterical with excitement. "Wow, you're a hero," she said and hugged him.

"If only someone from my class was there to see it," sighed Sailesh.

The next day was
Friday. On Fridays the
first period was a free
period, in the sense that
students were urged to
come up front and narrate
some interesting situations they had encountered during the previous
week.

As usual Sailesh had nothing to say, or perhaps he did have something to say but... 'Who will believe me? ...I will be the laughing stock of the class...' he thought. So like always, he sat in a corner, lost in thought. When somewhere... far away he heard his name being called.... Suddenly, there was a lot of noise... I am day dreaming again,' thought Sailesh! and 'thud' someone hit him on his back. He looked up and saw Vijay. "Boy, that was brave of you, old chap," he was saying.

"Wha...what?" asked a bewildered Sailesh.

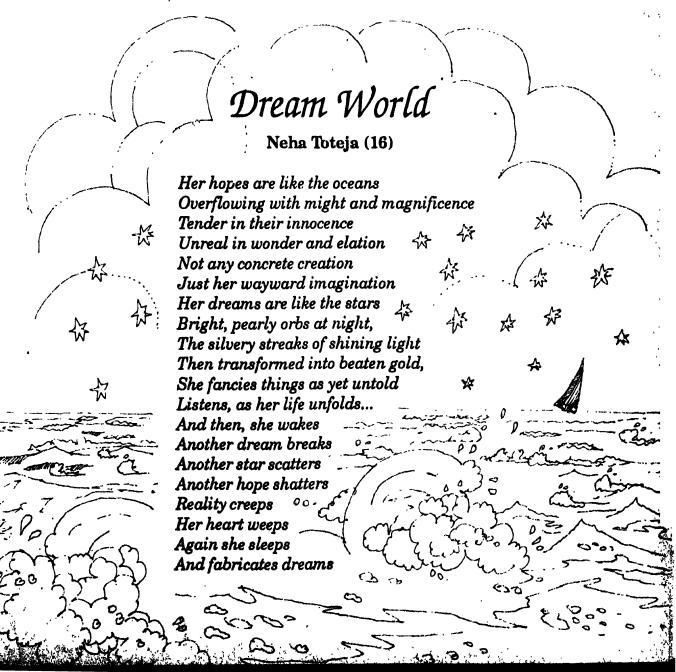
"Oh, come on now, don't act," said Uday.

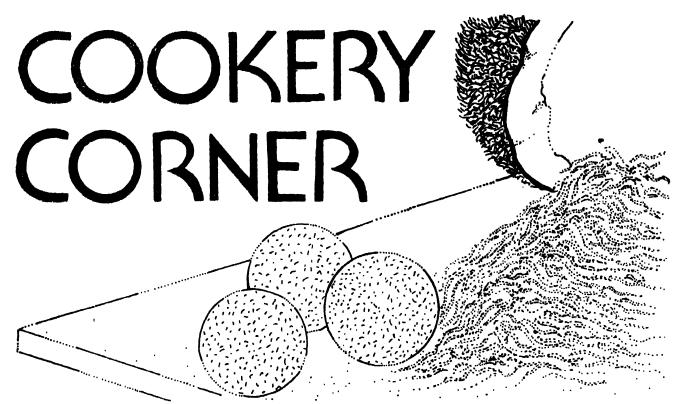
And from the far corner there was this girl, this smart, beautiful, bright, hearthrob of the class, Prema, shouting three cheers for Sailesh. "Hip Hip hooray... Hip Hip hooray!"
"But, how did you all

know?" asked Sailesh during the lunch break.

"Oh! I saw you from my bedroom window... helping the poor little girl," said Prema, looking sweetly at Sailesh.

And yes! His day was made! Sailesh had a wonderful weekend. And, in fact, his bout of depression was quite forgotten!





It is festival time once again and thoughts turn to all those delicious once-in-the-year goodies that grandmothers would turn out. Delicious aromas filled the house and the sweets and savouries had an appealing, homely look to them—not the garish 'mithai' under plastic covers look of 'halwai' shops.

All of grandmothers recipes were not complicated and time-consuming. Here are a few sweets and a savoury which any reasonably patient and determined person can make, to surprise the grown-ups with in his/her house. Try them out and let us know how well you succeeded.

Recipes by Mani

COCONUT LADDOO

Ingredients:

- 1 tin condensed milk
- 4 cups dessicated coconut
 - 4 cardamoms powdered

Method

- 1. Keep aside a little dessicated coconut.
- 2. Mix well cardamom powers with condensed

...

- milk and coconut.
- 3. Cook mixture in a heavy pan on slow fire.
- 4. When the mixture starts leaving the sides of the pan, remove from fire.
- 5. When cool enough to handle, with bare, buttered hands, make small balls.
- 6. Roll in coconut that has been kept aside.

BALUSHAHI

Illustrations: Seema Pandey

Ingredients:

- 1 cup maida
- 2 tablespoons ghee
- 1 tablespoon curd
- A pinch soda bicarb
- 2 crushed cardamoms
- 14 teaspoon salt
- A few sliced nuts

Ghee for deep frying

For Syrup
% cup sugar
4 tablespoons water
Å few drops lime juice

Method

Prepare the syrup first as follows:

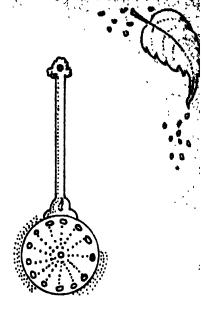
- 1. Boil water and sugar till sugar dissolves.
- 2. Cook to one-string consistency. That is, when you take the syrup between your thumb and finger and pull the fingers apart, a single string is formed.
- 3. Add a few drops of lime juice.

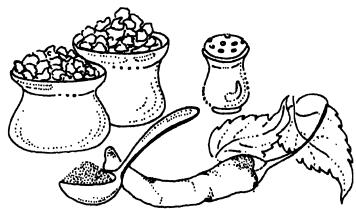


For the Balushahi

- 1. Seive flour with salt and soda bicarb.
- 2. Add crushed cardamom.
- 3. Rub in ghee and beaten curds.
- 4. Add cold water to make a soft dough.
- 5. Divide into equal sized small balls.
- 6. Flatten each ball between the palms so as to have the centre thinner than the sides.

- 7. Deep fry a few at a time in hot ghee on slow fire. Leave undisturbed for about ten minutes.
- 8. Turn and cook the other side.
- 9. When cooked, remove from ghee, drain and cool.
- 10. When quite cool, dip in the syrup. Remove and garnish with sliced nuts.





CORNFLAKES CHIVDA

Ingredients:

2 heaped cups cornflakes

1 cup chopped mixed nuts (raisins, cashewnuts, peanuts)

2 tablespoons ghee
1/2 teaspoon cumin and
mustard seeds

A few curry leaves

1 whole red chilli

¼ teaspoon red chilli powder

1/4 teaspoon salt or to taste

A pinch of sugar

Method

- 1. Heat ghee and fry the nuts.
- 2. Remove the nuts from the ghee.
- 3. Add cumin and mustard seeds and when they begin to splutter, add whole red chilli broken in two.
- 4. Add curry leaves, lower fire and add chilli powder, salt and sugar.

5. Add cornflakes and nuts and mix well. Do not crush the cornflakes.

6. Remove from fire, cool, and store in an air () tight container.



Story: Homagni Chaudhuri Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

room?" asked Pompa.

Guddu and Guriya, the two large teddy bears, one black and white, the other red and yellow, did not reply. They sat smiling quietly on top of the bookshelf.

Pompa was looking at her room. It was a small room but her very own. And now it was all arranged neatly. The bookshelf was mounted on the wall behind the study table and the sides of the shelf were covered with stickers of cartoon characters. Her favourite picture of a forest scene was taped on the wall and her giant straw hat hung from a hook in a corner of the room. A short but heavy club, purchased by her father when the family was on holiday in

Kalimpong, lay under the mattress of her bed. That was just in case.

After a long and patient search, Pompa's father, Mr. Ganguly, had found a house large enough for the family and yet priced within the modest amount he could afford to invest. It was a two-storied building on a small, square plot. The house was old but had been modernised into a compact unit and there was the possibility of a minute garden on the sides and at the back. "A real stroke of luck," said Mr. Ganguly.

"But the house has a ghost," objected Mrs. Ganguly. "The neighbours said so."

Sudeshna, Mr. Ganguly's sister and Pompa's Pishi (paternal aunt), laughed loudly. Sudeshna, a computer expert, worked as a Systems Analyst and did not believe anything that she could not study logically.

Pompa's Dadu (grandfather), the senior Mr. Ganguly, was very fond of plants and was looking forward to growing flowers and shrubs. On the terrace of the house, he would have rose bushes and some of those chilli plants that produced the small but very hot

variety of chillies. Over the years tastes had changed and these special chillies were not easily available in the market. In any case his daughterin-law refused to buy them. He would now grow his own supply. "There are other things to worry about," he said. "The children need space to study."

The house was bought and minor repairs done. The ground floor contained the kitchen, dining room, a large sitting area and Dadu's room. Pompa's vounger brother had decided to share his grandfather's room. The first floor had four rooms. One was set apart for guests who were frequent. The fourth room was small but that was all right as Pompa was able to claim it as her own.

Pompa knew that ghosts existed only in one's imagination. When she was younger, Pishi would dress up in a white sheet and moan, 'Ooh, oooh, oooh' in an effort to frighten her niece. After the first few attempts, Pompa refused to get scared. But even then Pompa had decided to keep her daddy's stout stick under her mattress.

It was the first day in

the new house. At bedtime, unlike other nights, Pompa did not fall asleep immediately. The strangeness and excitement kept her awake. And when she did sleep, she was wakened almost immediately by a strong wind blowing through the room. An 'Ooh, oooh, ooooh' sound was coming from the study chair. A little of the light from the lamp post, on the street outside, came in through the window into the room and lit it faintly. Pompa saw there was no one on the chair or in the As Pompa watched, the bed cover that she had kept folded on the chair,

As Pompa watched, the bed cover that she had kept folded on the chair, rose up. It swelled into a shape like that of the scarecrow used by farmers to frighten the birds away. It waved its arms and wailed loudly, 'Ooh, oooh, oooh,' Pompa was not

frightened but she was very annoyed. Pishi has been practising magic tricks and Pishi must have found some way of raising the bedcover from a distance. Pompa pulled



out the club from under the mattress and rushed at the pretence ghost. Surely there was some mechanism which was raising the bed cover. She would smash that. Pompa hit out at where the ghost's legs should be. There was a loud cry of pain and the bedcover fell down on the floor.

Pompa switched on the light. The room was as before except that the bedcover instead of lying neatly folded on the chair was on the floor. Pompa marched to Pishi's room which was next to hers. She would give Pishi a piece of her mind but she

was also worried about the loud cry. Nobody had been in the room but somebody had been hurt.

Pompa was surprised to find Pishi sleeping soundly. Or was she pretending? Pompa had to shake her vigorously before Pishi sat up. "No," said Pishi. "I did not not try to scare you. If I had, you would be shivering with fright.

"Anyway you are too old for ghosts," continued Pishi. "I'm tired and I've a full day's work at the office tomorrow. You are a very silly girl to be frightened by your dreams."

"Pishi, come and see for

yourself," argued Pompa.
"The bedcover moved by itself."

"No," said Pishi. "You must have moved it in your sleep. Go back to your bed." And very firmly Pishi turned over on her side and closed her eyes.

Next day, school was closed. Pompa came out of the house to help her grandfather who had already started work on his garden. Dadu was chatting with the elderly gentleman in the next house who had also come out to work on his small garden. "This is my granddaughter," said the

senior Mr. Ganguly to his neighbour and then to Pompa, "Basudadu built his house here fifteen years ago."

Mr. Basu looked at Pompa and said, "You will be my young friend. My children are abroad. Tell me, do you like this neighbourhood?"

"Basudadu," asked Pompa, "is there a ghost in our house?"

"I don't think so,"
replied Mr. Basu. "But
people keep talking. Five
years back, there was an
accident in that building
of yours. And if there, is a
ghost, it is that nasty boy,
Debu. He would beat up a
younger child if he found
him alone. But Debu was
easily frightened and if a
smaller child stood up to
him, Debu would run
away. He also tortured
small animals.





I'll tell you what happened to him. A kite had built a nest over the water tank on the roof of your house. One day, when Debu saw the . mother kite flying away, he poked at the nest with a long-handled broom. He wanted to scare the baby kites. But the mother kite saw him and flew back. She attacked Debu. clawing at his face. Debu tried to run away but in his fright, fell over the wall and broke his head."

"Debu tried to frighten

me yesterday night," said Pompa, "but I beat him up."

Pompa was called in for some work by her mother. "Brave girl, this granddaughter of yours," said Mr. Basu.

"Too much imagination," replied the senior Mr. Ganguly. "And she has such vivid dreams."

Grandfather was not quite right. The ghost had visited but only Pompa knew that. Of course, it would never come again.



Story: Amit Roy

HERE are certain things with a special meaning in our lives. They make each day brighter. A feeling of belonging develops, making them different in many ways. They hold a special significance for us and with a sense of pride, we call them our precious possessions.

At times it's nice to recollect childhood memories. I can still recall the joy that a new toy would bring along with it. I would not leave it, till one day after being tired of it, I would finally break it. Such would be its state that it no more looked like a tox.

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury

Excitement would not end there, rather it would grow. A matter of a few more days and a new toy, a different one would be there in my room, unaware of its ugly fate.

That feeling was just great! A feeling of pride, of joy that brought colour to life. At that instant I would think of nothing else because the new toy seemed to be the best thing in my life.

I can remember the day I got a new bicycle. A day before it seemed too hard to wait for the next day to come and when it came I wonder if I slept that night or not. It was like a long wait for dawn and

my first ride.

I would go for a round daily and clean my bike every morning. How I loved it! Gradually as I got busy with my studies, I hardly used the bicycle and cleaning it became a weekly affair.

Today it stands in my backyard with inches of dirt settled on it, its tyres deflated and I hardly remember when I sat on it the last time. I doubt if I'll ever be able to peddle off on it again.

I am sure that even today my bicycle would take me wherever I want to with the same speed as it used to many years back. But who cares for it? I have a better and a faster means of transport—my scooter or the car which gives me more comfort and "prestige".

With changing years, as I grew, I began to realise that the value of things we possess keeps on depreciating with time. You don't value things when they get old or when you get a better substitute for them.

You have to change with time and so do the things. The transistor your grandpa used to listen to many years ago appears monotonous to you. The latest high-tech stereo system would definitely make a difference and make you dance at every beat.

That's what we call "modernism". You have to discard the old things for the best and the latest. This is the usual mentality and it cannot be changed.

I thought that one day I would look for the best things in my life—my most precious possessions. I searched my almirah, glanced at every corner of my room and at last I found it. Yes, I really did!

It wasn't my gold-plated pen or the latest audio cassette I had bought the other day. Neither was it the best-seller I possess nor my camera that captures the best moments of my life. It was a photograph of my parents and sister.

I could think of nothing better in my life than my mama, papa and sister. Changing years have only added more value to them.

My parents who brought me into this world, taught me how to eat, walk and talk. Their intrinsic love and the trouble they took to bring me up are simply unforgettable.

They have been the only ones in my life who saw me turn into a young

boy, shared my secrets, joys and sorrows and supported me whenever I needed them.

My sister who has always been a part of all the things in my life, gave me the privilege of calling her "didi". How proud I am of her today.

There are many things that change with years but certainly not the tender relationships which the family members share with each other.

No matter what changes in this world, my parents and sister have always been and will always be the most "precious possessions" of my life.

The Bonds That Strengthen Tanuj Khosia (12)

A word uttered once Cannot be taken back one learns A time lived once Will never come back to us. Let us not repent our deeds Strengthening human bonds is the need By words and actions Show tolerance, non-violence and devotion These values won freedom For South Africa in the long run India supported South Africa's cause Because freedom is right for all The world is a family Where everybody should live in harmony Human relations should bind The wonderful universe of mankind.

cee-NFS Wildlife have to Walk?

Wildlife has come to be associated with animals, and large, fierce ones at that. But in fact wildlife, includes all undomesticated flora and fauna native to an area. So take a good look at the weeds sprouting under your feet—they are wildlife too. And do your bit for this wildlife.

- * Gardens don't have to be neatly trimmed, pruned and manicured. Plants growing unrestrained have a charm of their own.
- * Encourage the growth of a variety of plants hedges, grasses, shrubs, bushes and trees. These in turn will attract a variety of other wildlife—birds, insects, small animals.
- Be aware of the diversity of vegetation around you. It could be as exciting to look out for different kinds of grasses as to sight different kinds of wild animals.

Answers to Crossquiz

(See page 25)

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PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly. and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

7753
Simple Prasad (12)
D-2/111, Janakpuri
New Delhi 110058, India
Studying, playing
Any country

7754
Anju Ghalley (6)
Tencholing Primary
School
Wangdi Phodrang
Bhutan
Music, dancing
Japan, U.S.A.

7755
Juhi Chaturvedi (14)
486/7B, Faridabad 121006
Haryana, India
Reading, music
Any country

7756
Ruchita Maru (12)
Balaji Udyog
B-84 Indraprast
Industrial Area
Kota 324005, Rajasthan
India
Stamps, card collecting
Other than India

Annu Bodh (14)
c/o Mrs. Ranjana Jamwal
Near Sacred Heart School
V.P.O. Sidhpur
Dist. Kangra, Dharmasala
Himachal Pradesh, India
Reading, dancing
Any country

7758 B. Priya (15) 7A/61 W.E.A., Karol Bagh New Delhi 110005, India

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENROLMENT FORM							
Member No.	••••						
Name: Mister / Miss							
Address.	***********						
6 • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	*** *********						
Hobbies:							
Pen-friends wanted in (Country)							
*Age limit: 16 years	Signature						

GIRLS

Painting, singing U.S.A., Canada

7759 Nupur Sood (13) BW-5DA Shalimar Bagh Delhi 110052 Dancing, drawing India

7760
Latika Haryson (13)
28, Ber Sarai, Opp. J.N.U.
New Delhi 110016
Stamps, reading
Any country

7761
Chhavi Bhatia (11)
316 Urban Estate II
Hisar 125005
Haryana, India
Writing poetry, music
U.S.A., Japan

7762
Tshering Choeki (15)
Shawala Shop
Pema Gatshel
East Bhutan
Singing, dancing
Any country

7763
Rinchen Pem (15)
c/o Shhedup Shopkeeper
of Nangkhor Turning
P.O. Pema Gatshel
Dist. Pema Gatshel
Bhutan
Stamps, dancing
Any country

7764 Dem: Zangmo (15) c/o Sonam Tobhay Shopkeeper of Chimong Dist. Pema Gatshel Bhutan Photo collection, sports Any country

7765
Kinley Wangmo (13)
c/o Tshering Dema
Shopkeeper of Yonphula
Dist. Trashigang
East Bhutan
Photo collection, dancing
Any country

7766
Reeta Vishwa (15)
c/o H.B. Vishwa
Dzongkhang
Administration
P.O. Trongsa
Central Bhutan
Pen-friendship, music
Any country

7767
Meena Chhenam (16)
Class VIII-C
Trongsa Junior High
School
P.O. Trongsa, Bhutan
Pen-friendship, reading
Any country

7768
Satwari Joshi (10)
'Siddivinayak'
Odlem Bhat
Taleigaon, Panaji
Goa 403003, India
Painting, music
Any country

7769 Dupinder Kaur (10) AC-1/169-C, Shalimar Bagh Delhi 110052, India Pen-friendship, painting Any country

7770
Lal Maya Samal (16)
Class VIII-A
Trongsa Junior High
School
P.O. Trongsa, Bhutan
Pen-friendship, reading
Any country

7771
Sushila Subedy (15)
c/o Miss Laxmi Chattri
Tashigang General
Hospital
Dist. Tashigang
P.O. Tashigang
Bhutan
Pen-friendship, movies
Any country

7772
Rinchhin Pemo (16)
c/o Mr. Jambay Tashi
ADM Officer
Tashigang Dzong
Dist. Tashigang
Bhutan
Pen-friendship, movies
Any country

7773
Jigme Zangmo (12)
Chaskhar Primary School
Royal Government of
Bhutan
Monggar, Bhutan
Playing, dancing
Japan

BOYS

7774
Tanmaya Mohapatra (13)
Roll No. 3148
Caubery House
Sainik School
Dist. Khurda
Bhubhaneswar
Orissa, India

Reading, stamps

Other than India

7775
Siddhartha Chowdhury (12)
B-487, Sector-19
NOIDA, Ghaziabad
Uttar Pradesh 201301
India
Reading, horse riding

7776
Anand (15)
Hotel Samrat
Kulri Bazaar
Mussoorie
Uttar Pradesh 248179

U.K., U.S.A.

India Music, photography Any country

7777

Pusparaj Sahoo (14) Roll No. 3157 Gomati House Sainik School Dist. Khurda Bhubhaneswar 751005

Orissa, India Stamps, pen-friends Japan, Singaporè

7778
Sachin Garg (13)
32-A, L.I.G. Flats
Madipur, Rohtak Road
New Delhi 110063, India

Sports books, stamps and coins India, U.S.A.

7779
Saby Malhotra (14)
House No. 8
Opp. M.C. Office
Near Jagdish Park
Shahabad (M)
Dist. Kurukshetra
Haryana, India
Swimming, music
Any country

7780
Rangsina Hanse (15)
Chilarai House (3066)
Sainik School
Goalpara, P.O. Rajapara
Pin 783133, Assam
India
Football, music

Any country

7781

Ratan Ajay (14)
c/o Principal
P.O. Kimin (V.K.V. Sher)
Dist. Papumpare
Arunachal Pradesh 791121
India
Sports, music
Any country

7782
Harpreet Singh (15)
House No. 32, Singalpur
Shalimar Bagh
Delhi 110052, India
Cricket, football
India, Japan

7783 Amit Agarwal (12) 45 'Amit' Janaki Nagar Ganeshwadi Jalgaon 425001 Maharashtra, India Stamps, reading U.S.A., Germany

7784
Saurabh Kumar (13)
A-389, Sarita Vihar
New Delhi 110044, India
Reading, swimming
Switzerland, France

7785
Rajen Kumar Rai (12)
Tsangpo Primary School
P.O. Thrimsing
Trashigang
Eastern Bhutan
Football, singing
Japan, Switzerland

7786
Vikrant Chauhan (12)
Sec. No. 173, Plot No. 27A
Pradhikaran, Pune 411044
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, table tennis
Any country

7787
Shantanu Kalamkar (12)
M/s Habitat
Karjat-Murbad Road
At Takwe
Post Kadav, Tal. Karjat
Dist. Raigad 410201
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, table tennis
Any country

7788 Anooj Ashok Chauhan (9) Mother Cat Agencies 36-A Rathod Compound

BOYS

Mohanagar
Pune 411019
Maharashtra, India
Stamps, pets
Any country

7789
Farhan A. Sopariwala (12)
Noor Manzil, Panini Bhit
Bhagatalao
Surat-3
Gujarat, India
Stamps, pen-friendship
Any country

7790
V. Vishal Jain (15)
M/s. Vijay Exports
Vishal Jain
7 Kurumber Street
Salem-1, Tamil Nadu
India
Photography, music
India, U.S.A.

7791
Titu (14)
B-82, Jai Nagar
Trichy 620013
Tamil Nadu, India
Currency, photography
France, Egypt

7792
S. Suresh Sankaran (15)
C 3/266, Kailasapuram
B.H.E.L. Township
Trichy 620014
Tamil Nadu, India
Drawing, currency
Switzerland, Egypt

7793 D.A. Satish (16) H. No. 13-4-273 (New) Matwada Dist. Warangal 506002 Andhra Pradesh, India Singing, cricket India, U.S.A.

7794
Ronnie (16)
B-3/26C, Gasta Colony
Paschim Vihar
New Delhi 110063, India
Reading, movies
Any country

7795
Sagar Thapa (14)
c/o M.B. Thapa
56 Ballupur
Mandir Marg
Dehradun 248001
Uttar Pradesh, India
Reading, travelling
Singapore, U.S.A.

7796
Sachin Kalani (14)
s/o Mr. Anoop Kalani
D-38, Rajouri Garden
New Delhi 110027, India
Computers
Any country

7797
Gaurav Gupta (13)
c/o Dr. H.C. Gupta
Rosewood House
Hospital Road
Solan 173212
Himachal Pradesh, India
Reading, writing
India

7798 Narendra Pushkar (16) A-260, Gharoli Colony Mayur Vihar, Phase III Delhi 110096, India Reading, making friends India

7799
Vikas (15)
B-24, Prashant Vihar
Rohini, Sector-14
Delhi 110085, India
Reading, cricket
Any country

7800 Nishant (15) A-251, Prashant Vihar Rohini, Sector-14 Delhi 110085, India Chess, movies Any country

7801 C.S. Ratheesh (15) Tagore House Sainik School P.O. Kerala 695585 India Painting, reading Any country

7802 Manish Kumar (9) J-38, Saket New Delhi 110017, India Painting, sports Any country

7803
Dechen Wangdi (12)
Tsango Primary School
Thrimsing Dungkhag
Trashigang
Bhutan
Football, reading
India, U.S.A.

SHANKAR'S INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S COMPETITION 1996

RULES

- 1. The Competition is open to children all over the world. They should have been born on or after January 1, 1980.
- 2 There is no entry fee.
- Competitors are free to choose the theme/subject they are interested in, or like most, for their paintings/ drawings/writings.
- 4. Each entry should be certified by the parents/guardian/teacher that it is the original, unaided work of the competitor done during 1995. Entries should be an individual effort and NOT a combined work.
- 5. Every entry should carry the following information in English and in BLOCK LETTERS, at the back of the painting/ drawing or at the end of the written work:
 - * First Name * Surname * Boy or Girl * Date of Birth * Nationality * Full postal address * ' Subject/title of the entry
- 6. No entry will be returned. The copyright of all entries will rest with Shankar's International Children's Competition.
- 7. All packets should be pre-paid/adequately stamped and mailed directly to reach:

Shankar's International Children's Competition

Nehru House

4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg

New Delhi-110002

- 8. Entries sent by air cargo will not be accepted.
- 9. The last date for receipt of entries is October 31, 1995.

PAINTINGS/DRAWINGS

- 10. Black and white pencil drawings will not be accepted.
- 11. The size of each entry should NOT be less than 30 x 40 cm in size.
- 12. A competitor may submit upto 6 entries. They should NOT be mounted/framed.

WRITTEN WORK

- 13. Only entries in ENGLISH will be considered. Translations from other languages do not qualify for the competition.
- 14. Entries may be in the form of poems, plays, short stories, essays, descriptive writing, and the like.
- 15. A competitor may submit upto 6 entries. They should be in a neat handwriting or typed.

PRIZES

- 16. The entries will be judged by the organisers with the help of a jury.
- 17. The following prizes are offered:
 - i. The President of India's Gold Medal for the best painting/drawing.
 - ii. The Shankar's Award for the best written work.
 - iii. 24 Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Gold Medals for the next best paintings/drawings/written work.
 - iv. About 400 Silver Medals and 400 prizes.
 - v. Certificates of Merits to deserving entries.
- 18. Results will be announced in July 1996. Prize-winners will be informed individually by post.
- 19. The best entries will be published in Shankar's Children's Art Number, Volume 47. Selected entries will also appear in the monthly magazine for children, *Children's World*.
- 20. All competitors are entitled to a copy of the art Number (Vol. 47) at half price. They can reserve their copy by mailing the coupon.

R.No. 16259/68

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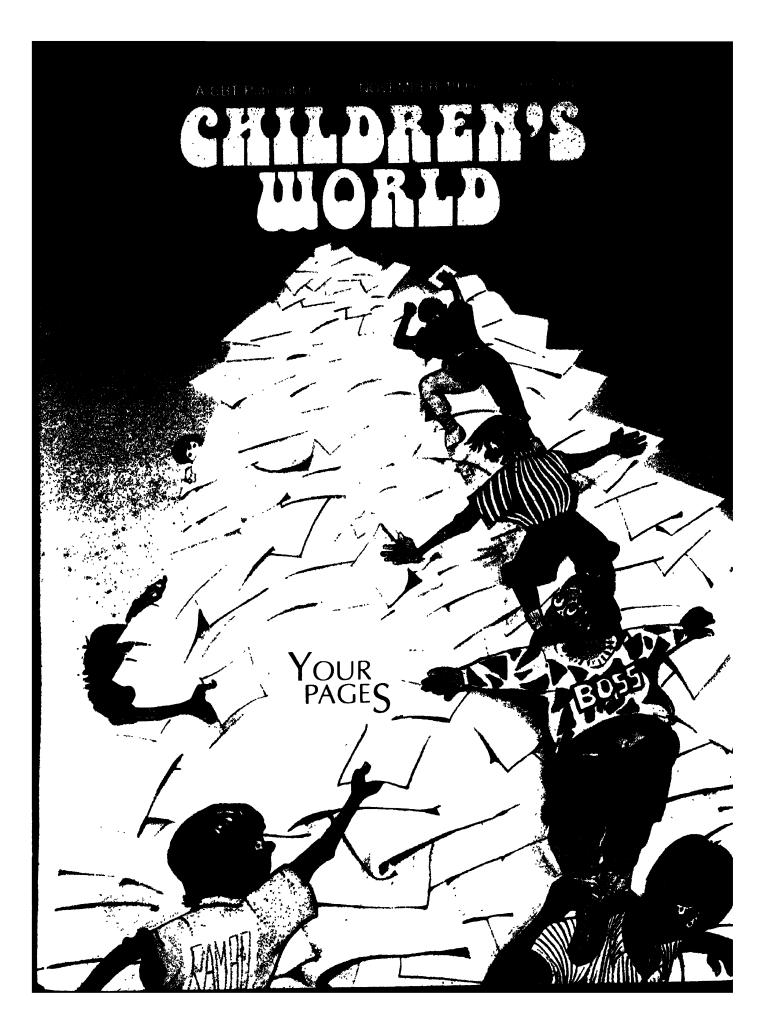


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CHILDREN'S WORLD

November 1995 Vol. XXVIII No. 8



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> This issue designed by Seema Pandey and Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

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Pranjal Goswami

S. Srl Devl

Neha Toteja

(79) Happiness

(80) Little Angel

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MADRAS T. Balachandran Business Representative 92, Brindavanam Nagar Valasaravakkam Madras 600087

Phone : 420290

WEST BENGAL Chhabi Chatterjee 43, A.L. Banerjee Street Konnagar Dist. Hoogly West Bengal 712235

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(Postfree by surface mail)

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CHILDREN'S WORLD
Nehru House
4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg
New Delhi 110002
Telegram: CHILDTRUST
Fax: 91-11-3721090
Telephones: 3316970-74
Typeset by Futura Graphics

Dear Readers

While most of the country was out there trying to test the miracle of milk, we at Children's World were hoping a miracle of sorts would solve our immediate problems. That's right. We were hoping to find some way of fitting all the selected articles into Your Pages. But try as we did to close pages, there was always something more, demanding inclusion. Having taken all the weighty decisions, we felt our burden ease somewhat as the pages went to the artists for illustration. The volley of protests from there was not unexpected. "What's come over children these days?" "Can't they write anything funny or humorous or happy any longer?" "Please give me something less serious to illustrate." "Oh, God, do they have to be so sombre from their infancy?" Quite simply, our own observations! And little we could do about it, because all of you out there had already decided this is what you wanted to write for Your Pages, so obviously this is what you wanted to read in Your Pages.

Not so, the artists. Not ones to give up so easily, they began combating the gloom cast by the sombre subjects of the stories they were illustrating, in their own way. Soon, telling cartoons of the editor and editorial staff started crowding the Art room's soft board. Then, satisfied there would be fewer editorial tips (read interference) on illustrating,

(nobody wanted to be the one to discover the next cartoon)—they gleefully got down to doing a good job. Much of the pleasantness of this issue comes from their efforts. Which brings us back to the state of mind of our young contributors. Just a glance at some of the titles says it all. A New Dawn, The Sun Shall Also Rise, Hope, The Street Boy, The Real Virus Lives On, Pining for Portry, Life, Anywhere Close by—what ails our citizens of tomorrow that they are so full of despair today? Must they reassure themselves that the sun will rise, or reiterate that there is hope or life or poetry? Most of these aspects we take for granted in our younger days. So that, as grown-ups, whatever the number of days we are meant to fill this world, we make each moment, each deed, each act, each word, meaningful and inspiring for all those who get to know us, our deeds, or our words.

Life need not be a draught of potent medicine all the while, need it? Humour too, can have its effect, just as the banal can, and like the profound always does—as long as you are true to yourselves and sincere unto others.

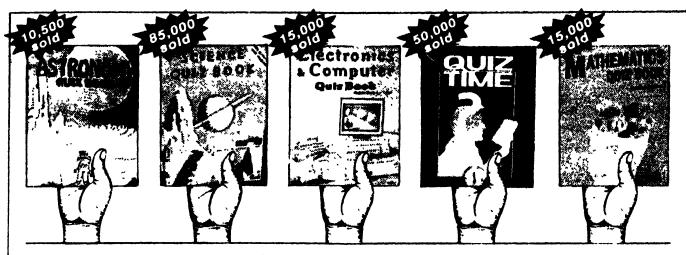
Children's World—and especially the Your Pages special issue—has always signified a very unique bond between all creatively conscious young minds. Just as we were beginning to wonder if, in keeping with

today's times, a polyester film had begun to replace the magic mist, came this letter from Manish Sharma, reaffirming our belief in all we have endeavoured to do to give the creative abilities in children, a fillip. This is what Manish writes: "I am happy to tell you that I have finally entered writing as a sort of full time profession. As you introduced me to this world, by publishing my debut creation—What Should I Become?' and as your doors have always been open to me for suggestions, I hope I don't have to tell you how indebted I am.

My book on forced paternal incest-"When Fathers Rape", has been selected for publication by a renowned firm and gets released in December: I did the complete research and script for the last six episodes of TV Youth magazine—'Spice'—telecast twice on DD, besides giving research assistance for an international film on Sufism—"The Legacy". All this, with my third year English (Hons) at college. Believe me, all these are factual details coming from a happy heart-after all, if the readers, writers and editors of 'Children's World' make a family, then needn't a young member inform this creative conglomerate of his modest achievement, achieved in ways more than one from these creative forces...?"

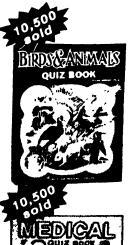
Need we say any more? Here's to a very happy and fun-filled Diwali and joyous reading.

Editor

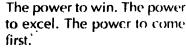


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Festivals and fairs



Text: O.P. Bhagat

Illustrations: Beejee

HERE is no moon in the sky. Yet the night is bright, beautifully bright. More lamps than on any other day shine and twinkle all over the city.

It is Diwali, the festival of lights.

Usually, Diwali comes off in November. But this year it falls earlier—on October 23. Also unusual is the total eclipse of the sun the day after the festival.

On any eclipse day in India the devout bathe in sacred rivers and lakes. As the bathers turn up in thousands, even lakhs, it results in a huge gathering or fair at the waterside.

Diwali is always a big attraction for foreign

tourists. The total solar eclipse makes it doubly so this time. It is also drawing the attention of many astronomers and other scientists.

The monsoon is over.
The sky is clear and the nice, cool autumn has set in. Dussehra has already been celebrated. Preparations are on for Diwali.

People clean and repaint their homes and shops. Every town and village wears a new look.

To each the lamps lend their festive glow. It is all the more beautiful because Diwali is celebrated on amavasya, the moonless night in the Indian month of Kartik.

Diwali is thus a seasonal festival. However, legends tell a different story. Before we get to know them, let us look at other festivals of lamps elsewhere. Not all of them come off at this time of the year, though.

Why do we light a lamp? To dispel darkness. The light of the lamps does not merely enable us to see, it also cheers us.

We fancy strange things in the dark. They fill our minds with fear. In the past many people thought that ghosts and demons haunted dark places. Some people still think so.

When a lamp is lit, the ghost or the demon takes flight. Light is thus considered lucky or auspicious. So it is to this day. How good we feel when, after a power failure, the dark rooms spring to light.



With the gloom dreary thoughts also vanish.

The sages liken ignorance to darkness. Banish it with the light of knowledge, they say.

On some days, for joy or to rejoice in something, we light more lamps. Or we do it for more luck or auspiciousness. These are mostly festival or memovable days.

The Chinese and the Japanese have their own festivals of lamps. They light lovely, colourful paper lanterns.

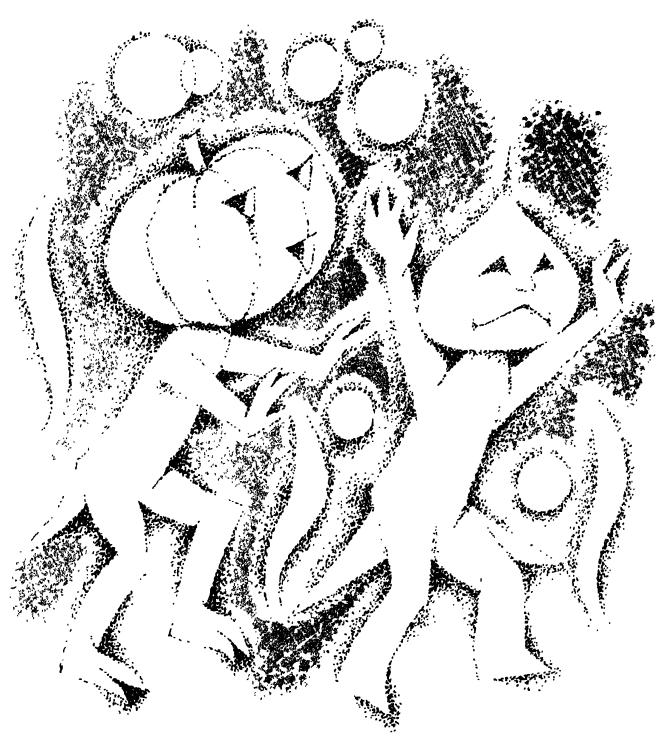
In Myanmar, festive lamps are lit in September when the rains end. They are lit again in October in honour of the Buddha.

Hanukka is the Jewish festival of lights. The Muslims light lamps in April at Shab-i-Barat.

The Sikhs celebrate
Diwali just like the Hindus. But they also light
lamps on Guru Nanak's
birthday in the month of
Kartik. So do the Jains to
celebrate the final
liberation of Mahavira.

Candlemas is a day of candles. It falls on February 2. In the cold Christian countries it marks the return of light to the world after the dark, dreary weeks of winter.

At Christmas the festival tree is decorated



with fairy lights—small, coloured bulbs—and tinsel stars.

But different are the Hallowe'en lanterns. Hallowe'en (October 31) was once the night of ghosts and witches. Now children, especially in America, have a lot of fun on that day.

In ghost masks or costumes, they visit their

neighbours. They get gifts of candy and chocolates. At night they light jack-o'lanterns."

They make these by hollowing out turnips and

pumpkins and carving out strange and scary faces on them. Inside are lighted candles.

England has a different celebration around this time. It is Guy Fawkes Day on November 5. It recalls a historical event.

On November 5, 1605, an attempt was made to blow up the Parliament. But the plot was discovered just in time. One of the men arrested on the spot was Guy Fawkes.

To this day every year, children make straw "guys" and beg money for fireworks. At night they let off the crackers and burn the effigies.

The use of fireworks is very old. It is said that at one time crackers were meant to scare away demons. Now they are used for fun. Or for a grand display at a jubilee or carnival.

Hiss! Sputter! Bang! Bang!

This is the sound of Diwali crackers. Many children start having fun with them much before the festival.

The markets are also decorated many days before the festival. The shops are full of novelties and eye-catching gift packs. People buy them for their families, friends

and others.

In the week before the festival Diwali melas are held. These are gaily lit city fetes, organised by clubs, women's groups and others.

There is a lot of fun and games to be had at these melas as also festive music and dancing. And merry-go-rounds. Even elephant rides. At places fireworks as well. And of course snack bars and other stalls.

Soon Diwali bazaars come up in every locality. Rows of vendors on the roadside sell diyas and many other things people need for the festival.

A small shallow clay cup with a beak, the diya is the age-old, oil-wick Diwali lamp. But there are large decorative diyas too. They are shaped like trays, turrets, nymphs and elephants.

Now candles are becoming more popular. And strings of winking coloured lights too. But those who celebrate Diwali the traditional way still go for diyas. They arrange them in rows and pleasing patterns.

The word Diwali comes from Deepavali, which means a row of lamps.

Deepmala means a garland of lamps.

The shoppers also buy toys and crackers for their children. Also festoons and paper lanterns. And images of Ganesha and Lakshmi.

The day before Diwali is Chhoti Diwali. Homes have already been cleaned and decorated. Now some lamps lend them a festive lustre.

Many are the Diwali legends. Some differ from region to region. The most popular of these says that the festival is in celebration of Rama's homecoming.

When, after 14 years of his exile, the prince returned to Ayodhya, so happy were the people that they decorated the town and illuminated it.

Every town and village does so to this day. Indeed every town looks bright and beautiful like a fairyland.

Also popular is the legend of Lakshmi. People believe that on Diwali night the goddess of good luck and wealth visits every home. But she turns away from the places which are not lit.

Many people worship Lakshmi. They pray to her for plenty and all the good things of life. Ganesha the god who removes hurdles is also worshipped then.

In Bengal the goddess worshipped is Kali.

For fun and sparkle fireworks have for long been used at Diwali. But for some years they have become a big craze. Rather than fun, crackers have become a source of creating deafening noise and pollution. Crores of rupees go up in smoke on a single night.

Some people gamble on this night. In fact, they start several days before the festival. And they tell a legend which says that there is nothing wrong in gambling.

Shiva and Parvati once played a game of dice, and enjoyed it. It happened to be Diwali. In their merry mood they blessed gambling during this festival.

No doubt this meant a game of dice or a few games with cowries for fun. Or, as in present times a few card games. But some people gamble to lose all their money.

As Diwali is an auspicious day, many businessmen begin their New Year from this date. And they open new account books.

The day after Diwali is Vishwakarma day. Vishwakarma is the divine architect. It is he who planned the epic city of Indraprastha. Mechanics and other skilled workers worship him on this day.

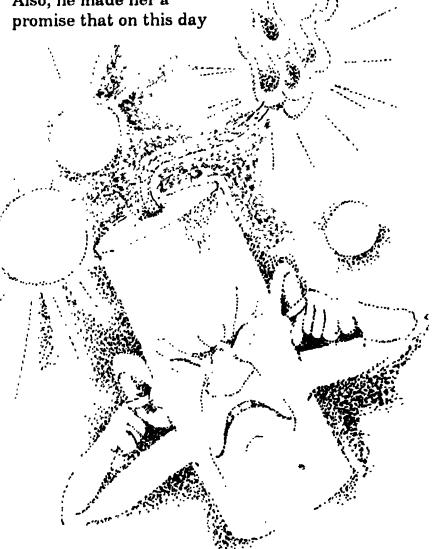
The next day is Bhai Dooj. Like Rakshabandhan, it is a day for brothers and sisters. While a sister applies a tilak on her brother's forehead, he gives her gifts.

In the story of Bhai
Dooj figures the god of
death. On this day, Yama
visited his sister, Yamuna,
the river goddess. He
brought presents for her.
Also, he made her a
promise that on this day

anyone who, after the tilak rite, gave a gift to his sister, would not go to the nether world.

With Bhai Dooj the curtain falls on the Diwali celebrations which begin with Dhanteras, if not earlier.

Note: These are not all the Diwali legends, or all the November festivals. Some have been left out. Children's Day, is of course being celebrated this issue through Your Pages.





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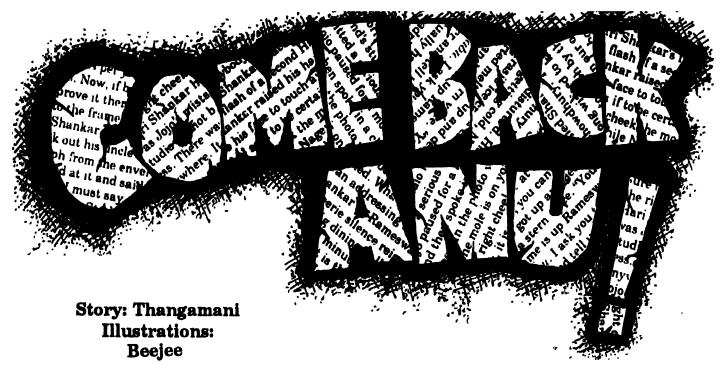
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HE first thing that wakes me up in the morning is the delicious aroma from the kitchen. Mother is making goodies for Diwali, just two days away. To protect her sweets, she hides the tins and jars, but that only makes it more exciting to find them. Believe it or not, she has hidden the kaju barfi in the locker this year!

She doesn't know that I have discovered the hiding place. I don't want to take chances by reducing the number of barfis and making her suspicious. So I shave off the barfis from the sides. That way they only reduce in size and not in numbers. Speak of ingenuity!

I snuggle deeper into the blanket and plan my

cracker purchases. Mother has given me a paltry sum of Rs.250. I will be the laughing stock of the gang, I am sure. Must see if I can scrounge some from my pocket money.

"Wake up, sleepyhead!"
It is Anu, my 'loving'
sister. I pull the sheet over
my head. She shakes me
like a sack of potatoes. If
there is something I hate
more than waking up in
the morning, it is being

"Oh, go away, it is Sunday!" I say grumpily.

shaken awake by her.

"Yes, and Nagarajan sir will be here in another hour."

Yech! Every trace of sleep vanishes from my eyes as I hear the name of our great music master, with whom I suspect my sister is in love. I must tell you about our music master—MM, I call him (pronounced Yum Yum). He is a pain. Only, I sometimes think that it is HE who is in pain, because he contorts his face while he sings—like a lot of classical music singers do. I have tried to tell mother that singing has to be a painful thing and better avoided, but she will not listen to me.

"You have no culture in you," she scolds me.

She belongs to the school of thought that believes in inculcating art and culture in children. All her friends' children learn music or dance.

I open one eye and observe Anu. She has bathed and dressed in a lelinga and blouse with a string of jasmine in her hair. Wow!

"I wish Yum Yum (MM) does not come today," I yawn.

"Yuck! Stop calling sir by that awful sounding name! And get ready fast!"

Just because she is marginally older than me, she thinks she can boss me around. In fact, she started it about two or three years ago. Before that we were real friends.

"Why can't you learn your precious music all by yourself?"

"Because we sing better as a pair, that's why," she says through clenched teeth. We have had this argument a zillion times.

Later, when he comes, Yum Yum says, "Sing the song I taught in the last class." We do, miss a beat and then sing off-key. It is mostly my fault.

"No, no! This way." Yum Yum claps to keep beat and starts singing. He gets really carried away and seems to be in terrible pain. I am seriously considering calling someone to help, when I wonder if he is married. How would it look if he married my sister? The image of a 'crying' Yum Yum and an adoring Anu is so hilarious that I start giggling and can't stop. Anu pinches me. That is another thing I hate about the music class. She keeps pinching me to make me do this and that. Can't she speak like a normal human being?

I am lost in all kinds of day-dreams when Yum Yum's voice jolts me awake. "I have entered your names in the Diwali music competition at the Community Centre. You can sing Sidhi vinayakam. Sandhya can carry off those high octaves well..."

Oh no! Not on Diwali day! When I had planned so much! What will the gang say? I will have to think of something...Anu, naturally, is thrilled to bits. I wonder if she is going to turn cartwheels to please her master...

When I am picking up the money and leaving for



the market later in the day, mother calls me.

"Why don't you practise, instead of rushing off with those boys to buy crackers? Can't you act like a girl? Now, take Anu...."

I switch off mother's voice. She can go on and on about her precious first born. According to mother. all girls should learn 'feminine' activities like sewing, knitting, cooking keeping house, etc., and behave like Victorian maids. God! I sometimes think she must be the first cousin of dinosaurs. I pretend not to be hurt by her comparison. But there is a salty taste in my mouth which I hurriedly swallow over the lump in my throat. "I will come back soon," I mumble before rushing out.

*

Diwali day is normal enough, except that father is not there with us. He is somewhere in Africa trying to close a deal for his company. He calls at 4 a.m. and speaks to me first! We bathe and wear our new dresses when I hear my friends.

"Sandy, are you coming? We are going to the park. Vijay has something new to show us..." Deepak is yelling outside.

"Coming! Wait!" I shout,

hurriedly collecting my arsenal.

"Sandhya, the competition is in the afternoon and you have not practised even once!"

"But, Mummy, I can sing it backwards. Even Yum...uh, Nagarajan sir thinks so!"

"Look at her! Can't she be normal? Thank God, at least Anu acts like a girl!" I can't but hear her. So, now I am abnormal! So what's new?

Is it my fault that I am practically the only 14year-old girl in our apartments who hangs out with boys and enjoys boisterous games and loud crackers? Is it my fault that the other girls would rather daintily light flower pots and sparklers and close their ears when we burst our ladis (string of crackers) that go on and on? She doesn't know that I can do all the things Anu does and then some. I will never forget one incident. I had broken my back making rangolis and was expecting a pat on my back, but I was shocked to hear her reaction.

"Anu is getting better and better!" she had said. All the anticipation had turned to dust and I rushed off to my room. Her efforts to praise me

later sounded so artificial. Can she blame me that I turned to the things Anu could not do, because I had no chance of excelling in the things Anu did? I started writing poetry, articles and stories. Never mind if no one except father appreciated THOSE. In fact, sometimes I feel he is the only person who loves me in the whole house. But he is hardly ever home—always busy with his tours....

I didn't honestly mean to be late, but we were having so much fun that it was already one o'clock when I rushed in, my face streaked with dirt and my hair in a mess. I ignore the shocked look on mother's face. It is not my idea to take part in the competition, is it?

"Sandy, please, will you practise once before leaving?" It is the GREAT Anu, pleading with me. I feel sorry for her. She is just two years older, but she could have been twenty years my senior, the way she acts sometimes.

"Okay. Come on!" We sit down and sing the song twice, flawlessly. Yum Yum is right. I can sing pretty well. Even mother is pleased for a change.

At the Community

Centre hall, Anu is nervous. "Just sing the way you did at home. We must win this," murmurs Anu.

"Of course, silly. We will take home the cup, don't worry," I assure her jauntily. I do not tell her that my sudden determination is due to the fact that I have spied Ranjini among the competitors. She is in my class and thinks that she is the cat's whiskers when it comes to singing. She looks smugly at me.

We walk to the stage when it is our turn. I look at the packed hall and at my mother in the front row. She is holding up her thumb and smiling...

The pallavi and anupallavi (refrain and first stanza) go off pretty well, my voice taking the tune to its highest octave like gliding silk (what a metaphor!). Maybe we could really win the cup. I relax. Then suddenly something horrible happens. My voice cracks! Oh, God! Wasn't the cracking of voice supposed to happen only to teenaged boys? A shocked Anu misses the next word and we know we have lost by a mile. Ranjini is grinning happily.

I don't remember much after that except Anu's accusing voice. "You did that on purpose. How could you? Now I know how much you hate me!" She is fighting her tears and does not wait for me to explain.

"Oh, Sandhya! How many times did I tell you to practise, not to eat all the sweets and savouries? But would you listen? Poor Anu!" Mother twists the dagger.

' lift my chin. No, I won't reply. And I will not cry either. All they can think of is how Anu feels. Don't I count at all? How can they even assume that I had done it on purpose? Don't they think that I have feelings too



and I feel equally rotten?

Diwali had lost its charm by the time we came home. I pretend to have a headache and refuse to go out. It is quite late when I hear Anu come in. She tiptoes around the room, thinking that I am sleeping. After sometime though, I hear her quiet sobbing. Suddenly I want to speak to her—the first time in years. We used to be great friends when we were children. What happened?

"Anu...."

"Sandy, why did you do it? Can't you see I wanted to win so badly? To show mother and everyone else that I could do well in something. She is always going on about how good a writer you are, what a great brain you have...Singing and other household tasks are the only way to make her notice me and even in that I need your help..." she continues sobbing, rather loudly now.

I am speechless. Surely she must be mistaken or I must have heard her wrong. Anu THE GREAT, who is the paragon of womanly virtues, actually having a complex about poor, abnormal, freak Sandhya? Why, her accomplishments come out

of my ears once mother starts off. Impossible!

"Anu, I think you have got it wrong! It is you who is the toast of the family. Not I. I am the no-good tomboy, remember? Come to think of it, you were too. But suddenly you changed to become the goody-goody Anu. Don't you like to play with us anymore? Why, Anu?"

"I still do!" she sounds fierce. "But the way mother acts about girls enjoying 'unfeminine pastimes' as she puts it, I slowly gave it up..."

"But...."

"And you! You wouldn't understand me and simply cut me dead. Oh, how I long to come out with you guys..."

I jump out of my bed and am in hers in a trice, snuggling, like we used to, before. I have just realised something and I am whispering now...

"Oh God, it's her way of making us do things we didn't want to. And we, like babies, fell for it."

"Yes, now that you say it, it is true. Remember, how she used to say to you, 'Drink your milk.

Look at Anu. She is such a good girl.' I swelled with pride at her words. And after sometime she would say, 'Wash behind your

ears, Anu. See, Sandhya is younger than you and is so smart!"

"Maybe she meant well but it was foolish of both of us to take it out on each other."

"But you do like Yum Yum, don't you?" I have to know for sure.

Her laughter startles me. "Now, that is a precious name! Do you know how hard it was for me not to laugh every time you said it? But I was afraid of displeasing mother..." There we go again! But I would not let the mood pass.

"And I thought you were in love with him!" We both are in splits.

Suddenly, a long burst of crackers shatters the night air.

"That must be Vijay with his clay pot. Do you know what a deafening sound it produces when you light a cracker in it?" I ask her.

"Do you think we could slip away and join them?" I look at the old Anu. Boy, am I glad to have her back!

"Yes, why not? Come, let's get dressed and go! And Anu, about today, I honestly don't know what happened to my voice..."

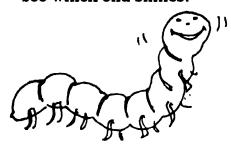
"Forget it! Let's run before they go away!" We hold hands and run out.

Unquestionably FUNIVA

Learn these questions and answers for a 'quick' laugh.

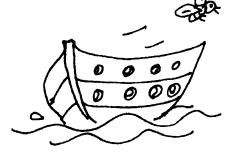
How do you tell which end of a worm is the head?

Tickle its middle and see which end smiles.



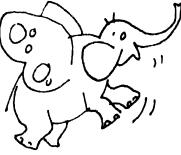
Where did Noah keep his bees?

In the Ark hives.

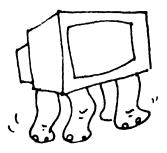


What did the sea say to the shore?

Nothing, it just waved.

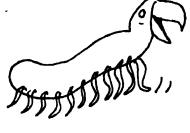


What's a jumbo jet? A flying elephant.



What do you get if you cross an elephant with a computer?

A huge four-legged know all.



What do you get if you cross a centipede with a parrot?

A walkie-talkie.

What do cats read at breakfast time?

Mewspapers.



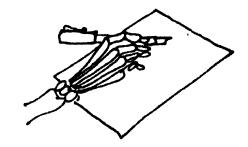
What do you get if you cross a monkey with a flower?

A chimp pansy.



How does a ghost begin a letter?

Tomb it may concern.





Why do ghosts like tall buildings?

Because they have lots of scarecases.

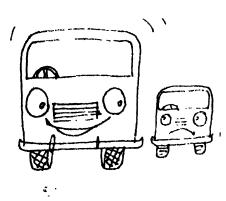


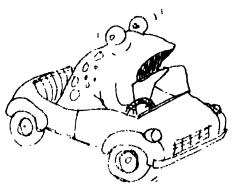
Why didn't the skeleton go to the ball?

Because he had no body to dance with.



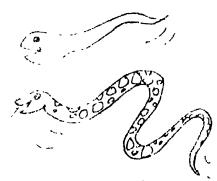
What did the big bus say to the little bus?
You're too young to be driving.





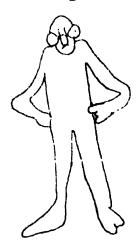
What happens when the frog's car breaks down?

It gets toad away.



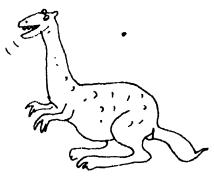
Why can't you play jokes on snakes?

Because you can never pull their leg.



Why are adults boring? Because they are groanups. What would you have if a herd of dinosaurs ran over Batman and Robin?

You'd get Flatman and Ribbon.



What would you call a person who eats only vegetables?

A vegetarian.

And what about a man who eats people?

A humanitarian.



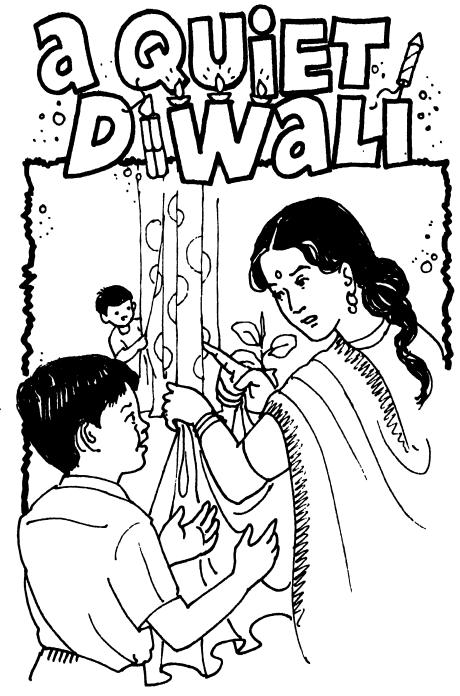
Story: Dipavali Debroy Illustrations:

IVE away those awful crackers to Bunty and Monty," said Mummy. "I had told you not to buy any crackers this time."

"But Mummy, Diwali won't be Diwali without any crackers!" protested Vineet. He had just come in with a huge load of fireworks that he had bought with the pocketmoney he had been saving up for the past few months.

Mummy was quite firm. "Out of consideration for Rebu, you have to do without crackers this time," she explained. As she had before, several times.

Rebu was Vineet's cousin, staying with them temporarily, along with his mother, Daddy's sister, Auntie Neela. Eight-yearold Rebu was a delicate child. He kept having earaches and headaches and there seemed to be something wrong with the nerves connected to his ears. He badly needed treatment. But in the small town bordering Bihar where they lived. there were no ear-nose-



throat specialists. So, with the start of autumn vacation in Rebu's school, Auntie Neela had brought him over to Calcutta. Here ENT specialists were keeping him under observation. They were even thinking of operating on

him. Meanwhile, they had not only prescribed medicines but also advised that he should be protected from loud noises. And Mummy had asked Vineet to go without crackers this Diwali.

No crackers at Diwali!

GHILDREN'S WORLD

NOVEMBER 1996

Vineet had been aghast. "It's too much of a sacrifice," he said. "As it is, when Rebu comes, I have to take him along when I go to play with my friends—who are all years senior to him, and that's a great strain on me. On top of it, no crackers!"

"It's only crackers that I am asking you to do without," said Mummy. "You can have phuljhari and tarabatti and rangmashaal (sparklers), sanpbari (snake-pellets) and rang-deshlai (coloured matches). And mombatti (candles) and tubri (flower-pots) or hawui (rockets). Nothing that goes bang."

"But the bangs are the best part of Diwali, Mummy. In fact, Bunty and I are going to have a competition as to who can make the loudest bang this time."

"You are going to do no such thing!" said Mummy, her voice really stern. "Not with Rebu around."

"But at Diwali there will be bangs and bursts from everywhere. Will it make any difference whether I burst my crackers or not?"

"It will. For, it is bangs from close quarters that Rebu has to be protected from."

"If Rebu has got a problem with his ears, why can't he just stuff them with some cottonwool and let me have my fun?" said Vineet sulkily.

"No," said Mummy. "He is your guest and it is you who must make allowances for him, not the other way round."

"That's all right,
Mummy," said Vineet. "I
promised to be quiet while
he is here and I am keeping my promise. I don't go
bumping up the stairs, or
blow on my whistle every
now and then like I used
to. But not to have crackers at Diwali—that's a bit
too hard on me!"

"I won't hear another word," said Mummy. "Go over next door at once and give away your crackers to Bunty and Monty."

Very unwillingly, Vineet proceeded.

 \bigstar

Bunty and Monty lived next door and were his classmates at school.

"Hi! Come and take a look at the crackers we have bought," said Bunty as soon as Vineet went in.

"Powerful, they really are," said Monty gleefully.

Vineet took stock of their crackers, flower-pots and rockets. They were of every shape and size and were in purple paper wrappings labelled in green and gold. Sighing, he then explained his sorry situation to Bunty and Monty.

"You are giving us a walkover then, so far as the *dhamaka* competition is concerned," said Bunty.

Vineet nodded miserably.

"We would have won anyway," said Bunty. "I bet you have just got cold feet and are crying off. This Rebu stuff is made up."

"Of course not," shouted Vineet angrily.

"Then why don't you come over here and burst your crackers? That way, they won't reach your silly little cousin's ears and we'll be able to have our bit of fun."

"That's an idea!" said Vineet and his eyes began to sparkle again. He left for home without handing over the crackers to Bunty and Monty. Luckily for him, Mummy was not at home when he went in.

 \star

Next day, right after noon, the neighbourhood began to resound with booms and bangs and rockets began to soar up into the sky. The city had started its Diwali celebrations.

"I'm going next door,"

said Vineet, but Mummy would not let him. "What! Leave poor Rebu alone and go and celebrate Diwali with chums of your own! How can you think of such a thing!"

"But this way, I won't be making a noise here and Rebu's ears won't get hurt."

"But his feelings will be. Or at least Neela's."

"Oh Mummy, what will Bunty and Monty think of me if I don't show up? They'll think I have backed out of the dhamaka competition. Please let me go."

"No, I can't," said Mummy, and her tone was final.

Vineet was down in the dumps.

The sitting-room opened on to a balcony. Vineet peeped into it. There was Rebu, sitting all by himself, toying with some packets of candles and crackers. His thin face broke into a smile as he saw Vineet. "Dada (elder brother), come, let's fix the candles on the balcony railings."

Vineet grunted sullenly.
"Have you taken a look
at these long, long sparklers?" Rebu went on
happily.

"Oh, it's all kid stuff," shouted Vineet.

Rebu's face fell.

"If I can't have crackers, I don't want sparklers either," Vineet scowled at him. "As for the candles, you can fix them all yourself. I have better things to do!"

He was turning away from the room, when he heard the telephone ring in the passage. Mummy hurried out of the kitchen and there was an excited conversation. Uncle Viru, a favourite cousin of Mummy's who lived abroad, was flying across India and happened to have a few hours on his hands. He wanted everyone to go and meet him at the airport.

"Quick, let's rush," said Auntie Neela. "I haven't met him for ages and if I



don't get to meet him now, I don't know when I'll get a chance again."

Because it was so noisy outside, Mummy did not fancy taking Vineet and Rebu along. "Let the children enjoy themselves at home," she said.

Vineet brightened up at once. Perhaps now—? But Mummy was quicker. "Don't you take this chance and go over next door!" she warned, as she hurried out with Auntie.

But Vineet had not given up as yet. He observed that Bunty and Monty were there on the terrace of their house. He hollered across and tried to explain the situation.

"We don't care," Bunty shouted back.

"It's a clear case of a walkover!" screamed Monty.

An idea struck Vineet. "Look," he shouted across to them, "I'll burst the crackers you chose in my room. If you get to hear it from over here, it is my win. If you don't, I lose."

"Agreed," shouted Bunty and Monty.

*

Vineet went to his room and took out the crackers he had kept out of sight. He picked up the biggest, glorious in its wrapping of purple and gold. What a size it was! What a dhamaka it would make! He shut the doors and windows. 'That'll double the noise,' he thought. He knew he was attempting something very foolish, but the temptation to go ahead was irresistible. Without further thought he took up the box of coloured matches, struck a match stick and held it to the cracker.

The explosion in the room shook him from top to toe. Door-latches rattled, a crack appeared in a window-pane, books and papers fell down from the littered table-top, and knick-knacks from the wall clattered down.

Vineet himself fell down under the impact. It was a minute or two before he could pick himself up from the floor.

Looking around, he said, "Well, I suppose I'll have to explain all this mess to Mummy and Daddy. But I don't care! I'm sure the dhamaka has been loud enough and I have won."

He saw Rebu peep in with a scared face. He must have heard the bang and come up to see what it was. Vineet pushed Rebu away impatiently and went out to the terrace.

Monty's thumb and forefinger were ringed together in a gesture of appreciation. The dhamaka must have reached them. Bunty was waving at Vineet and yelling. But why couldn't he hear what Bunty was hollering? He realised something else. The world around him had suddenly grown very quiet. Why, it was soundless! There were no bursts of crackers. no shouts from the streets. not even the blast of songs from the loudspeakers fixed at the Kali-puja pandal a few houses away.

There was a gust of wind and the door leading to the terrace swung back towards the wall. Without a sound. The posters on the walls of his room, some of whose ends had come off, fluttered against the walls. Soundlessly.

Terrified, Vineet shrieked. That is, he knew he was shrieking, but not a trace of it reached him. He felt his vocal chords strain and strain, but he could not hear his own voice.

There was a dull pain in his ears. That was the only thing that told him that they were still there.

Otherwise, he was absolutely cut off from the world of sounds.

"I've gone deaf!" screamed Vineet—silently, to him it seemed.

"Mummy! Daddy!" he shouted, and then remembered that they were not in. Still, he rushed down and charged into one room after another.

From the windows of the sitting room he could see the dark sky outside blossom out in starry showers. Diwali fireworks had started. Calcutta must be reeling under waves of cracker-bursts.

But for him, it was a silent world.

'How'll I bear it! This world without sounds!'

Just then his eyes fell upon Rebu. He was out on the balcony of his room. He had a muffler tied round his head and was trying to fix candles on the balcony railing. But being too small, he was not succeeding very well.

All of a sudden, Rebu jumped and put his hands to his ears. Vineet stared in surprise, but only for a moment. He guessed in a second that there must have been a sudden burst of crackers somewhere—which he had just not heard, but which had shaken Rebu.

For a moment, he felt nothing but self-pity. But as he saw Rebu, it



changed to concern. Rebu had fallen to the floor, still clutching his ears. Why, he must be in great pain, thought Vineet. He rushed up to Rebu and picked him up. "Rebu, what's the matter?" he asked.

Rebu's tiny, thin face was still twisted with pain, but he sat up and managed a grin. He said something. Vineet saw his lips move, but could not hear the words.

'He's a plucky fellow!'
thought Vineet. 'Loud
noises hurt him so, and
he's still trying to smile.
Why, he was even trying
to light candles and cel-

ebrate Diwali! Well, if he can bear his troubles, so can I!'

He put his hand on Rebu's shoulders. "Come, I'll help you fix the candles," he said. Rebu's eyes grew bright and he handed over some candles to Vineet.

Together, they began to fix the candles to the grille.

POP! Suddenly there was a peculiar sensation in Vineet's ears and the next moment, the world burst in on him in a mad melee of crackles and booms.

Dharam-dhram-dhum!

Once again the rockets



swished up into the sky and the crackers burst all around. Once again the streets were full of the honking of vehicles, blares of loudspeakers and the shouts of children.

He had not gone deaf after all. The cracker he had burst, had not done any lasting damage to his ears.

Rebu turned abruptly to Vineet and said, "Vineet dada, how about bursting some crackers? Those that I saw in your room? I

heard Aunt tell you not to burst them—but now that she isn't here, if you want to, you can!"

"But—but—" stuttered Vineet.

"I'll cover my ears with a second muffler—then I'll put on a monkey-cap! That way I won't get hurt at all."

Vineet found it difficult to speak. Then he said gruffly, "Just don't budge from here. I'm coming in a jiffy."

He rushed to his room

and took out the remaining crackers. Then he quickly went next door and handed them over to Bunty and Monty. He returned to the balcony where Rebu stood patiently, waiting.

He pulled Rebu closer and rearranged the muffler that Rebu had clumsily wound round his ears.

"Come, let's light the candles," said Vineet.

"And after that?"

"After that, we'll have a go at the sparklers," said Vineet to Rebu.



Illustrations: Subir Roy

Dear plots and blots,

I have been told that there are some things you do with ink and some you don't. For instance, you are supposed to fill a fountain pen with the said ink, red, green or yellow and you are supposed to write with the above mentioned pen on paper that has not yet been mentioned. But you get the idea, don't you? That what you do with ink which is mostly blue actually, what you do is fill a pen with it and then write with the pen.

But you are not supposed to do other things with ink. You are not supposed to colour your face with it.

Or use it to make patterns on my pillow.

Or pour it wholesale on bits of blotting paper in the name of art.

In other words, you don't play around with ink as if it is a football or a puppy dog.

But my brother does...

Now, as an older brother, wise with a lot of practical experience of life, I have so far not interfered with my brother's education. I have not so far taught him how to sleep in class with your eyes open or how to pre-

tend to be writing furiously when you don't
know the answer to a
single question. I thought
there was still time for me
to teach him all these
important things but in
the meanwhile, he has
been taught, at school how
to mess about with ink. At
school,mind! With ink,
mind!

As I said I had always been told that there are some things to be done with ink and some things you don't... like ... like ruining my pillowcase with ink blobs.

"They are not blobs," screamed back my brother when I screamed at him, "they are works of art. I am an artist... I am not a criminal."

Criminal was the word that brought my mother into my room to find out what was happening. But as soon as she came in and saw my pillowcase, she began screaming too.

"Perky," she yelled.
"What have you done to
your pillowcase? How dare
you put ink blobs on your
pillowcase? Do you know
how difficult it is to wash
ink off? Don't you have
any sense? Ink! How on
earth..."

Before I could open my mouth, my room had become a tornado of





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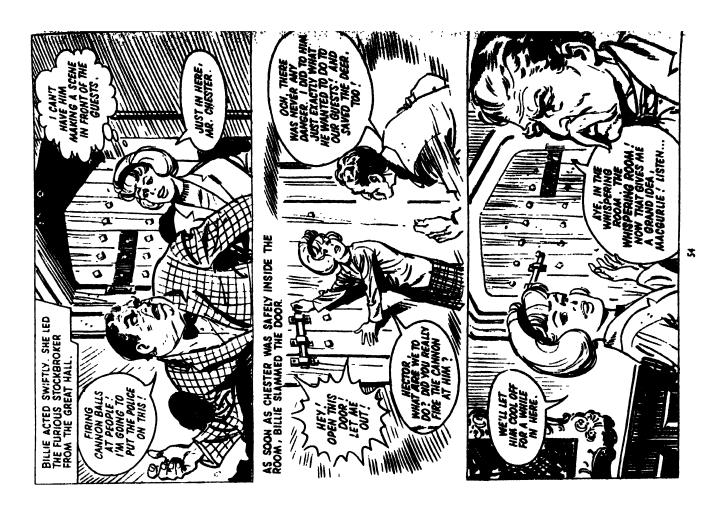
Time of Exhibition (Closed on Monday)
Morning (10 a.m.)-Evening (5 p.m.)

Entry Fees:
For Adults—Rs. 2/For Children—Rs. 1/-

OUR LAIRD'S A LASSIE - PART



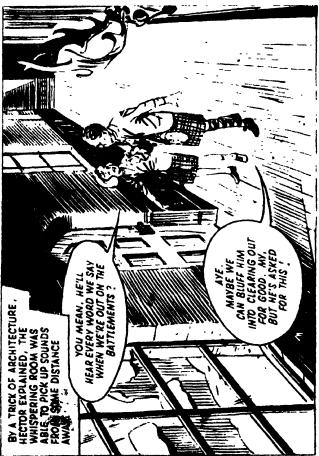


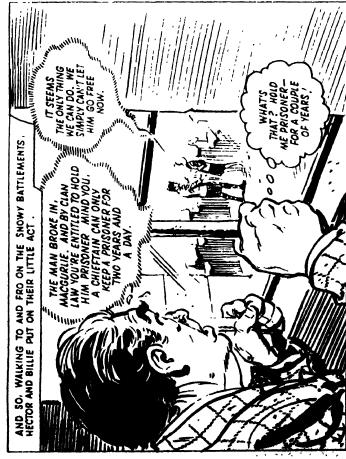


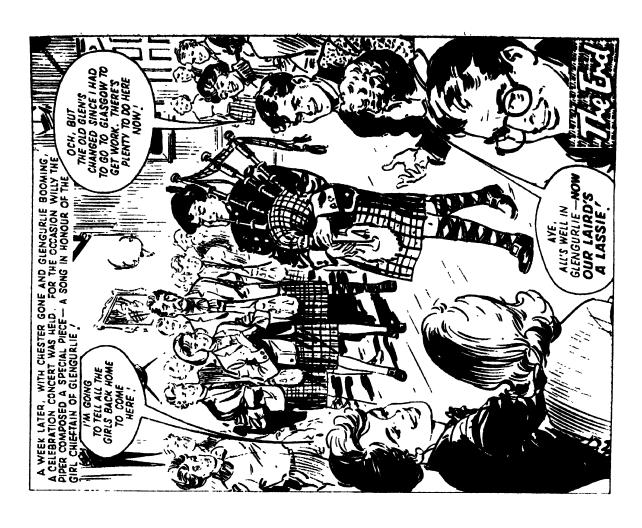






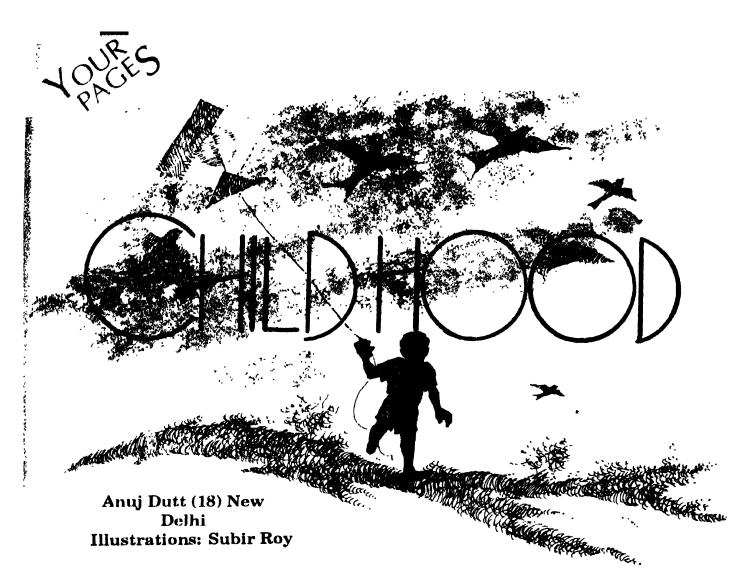












HILDHOOD days are those days which, when you look back on or think about, tell you how far you have travelled on life's different ways.

Those carefree days of laughter and play, when you were a child made of wet, unmoulded clay. Emotions of jealousy, hate and anger hadn't hardened you nor had the vices of pride and folly blackened you.

You were pure, you were carefree; that young sagling, yearning to be a tree. You only knew about the sun and its sunshine, but not about drugs and crime.

Tears and a little crying could get you that toy and make you a winner. But then you grew up and realised that a person who didn't sow seeds of labour to earn his bread was considered a sinner.

For your parents you were number one, their joy, their hopes, their aspirations—you, their only son. You slipped and fell, they cried; but for the

world it was their share of fun.

You saw love all around you, that kiss on the cheek, that ruffling of hair, that throw in the air. You were in the kingdom of fairies. Until the day you came back from work one day, all tired and weary.

Now you search frantically for that world that had stories of Red Riding Hood. That lost world you left long ago and are yearning now to get back to—your childhood.



Story: Hirak Parikh (15),

Pune

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chowdhury

HEEKU walked with a slight swagger, pretending the world was his. He was just a child from the many slums of Bombay. His bedraggled, uncouth appearance wouldn't mean much to a passer-by. They saw many such urchins everyday. A soiled T-shirt and patched up pair of shorts. A black, unkempt mop of hair almost hiding his unwashed face. But Cheeku did not care. He whistled and smiled. That smile seemed to light up his whole face.

How wonderful he felt as the breeze blowing from the sea touched his face. The Gateway of India loomed in the horizon. It looked magnificent, outclassing the utilitarian skyscrapers in beauty and grandeur. Bombay is always like that. A city of sharp divides—where the



101/65

rich and the poor sit next to each other, the happy and the unhappy sit on the same bench. But Cheeku was oblivious to everyone around him. He was dreaming. Dreaming like thousands in the great city did.

'How wonderful to have a garage of my own. All those shiny cars will come and go. And I, Chintamani, will repair them. I shall be rich and Mama will never have to work in that rotten factory again,' he shuddered, remembering the stink of the chemicals in the factory.

'Checku's througe I shall

It was time for work at the busy intersection. In spite of his mother telling him to take to another job, Cheeku didn't. He cleaned cars because he loved them. He liked to feel the car's body. Peer through the glass. It was sheer joy

call it and how proud

Mama will be.'

to work on a car.

"Thank you, Sir," he said taking the coins and hearing the jingle of the coins in his pocket. The signal changed and the car moved off engulfing Cheeku in its fumes. He saw a small car approach and raced to it before his rival, Satish, did. He quickly started to clean

the glass and rub the shiny body, before the owner could protest. The owner, Mr. Khanna, mumbled, "This is getting on my nerves. At every intersection my car is cleaned. Before I can even protest these rascals have finished with the car."

"Saab, paisa," said Cheeku stretching out his grubby hand. Mr. Khanna gave him the coins with a scowl. Cheeku had learnt to take all this in his stride.

Soon the traffic increased and the cars and buses honked. It could make a man insane. Checku did good business. His joy heightened as his pocket grew heavy. Now the sun had reached its height and it was time to grab a bite.

Cheeku carefully counted the money, as he walked on. 'Not bad at all. Mama will be so happy. How I wish she would not work so hard.' He stopped abruptly in front of the huge glass windows of a jewellery shop.

'How handsome I look. I would be a perfect mechanic,' he thought. He scampered away on seeing the angry stare of the owner.

Cheeku was hungry. He reached his favourite tea-



stall and bought a slice of bread and some tea. It did not satisfy his great hunger, but over the years Cheeku had learnt to satisfy the mind and not the stomach.

He drifted through the city. He reached the big school and stopped. He peered through the iron gates and saw the playground. Boys were playing games, laughing and joking. Some were with books and were having lots of fun... something Cheeku never had.

From the age of six, Cheeku had worked. He had fought hard to stay alive. He had withstood numerous beatings from his drunken father. His blood had boiled when his father beat his mother. He had felt the growling in his stomach. He had felt the thorns under his feet. He had seen the cruel, harsh and mean world... something these boys had never seen.

The two belonged to separate worlds. He was from the real world, the fight-for-survival world. They came from the protected world. Far from pain, misery and suffering.

It was almost three o'clock and Cheeku hurried home. His mother would be back from the factory. 'Mama is the only person I have in this world'. The thought of the inhuman conditions of the factory sickened him.

A large crowd was gathered outside his dingy

shack. He ran in, surprised. But once he entered, he knew what had happened. A white sheet covered his mother's body. He stood motionless, too stunned, then threw himself on the ground.

"No," he screamed and tore the sheet away.

His mother's face was pale and weary. But now she was dead. Gone forever, and only her body remained.

Cheeku shrieked and tears fell like they never had. He was shattered. He was totally broken. All his dreams split into thousands of pieces. He tried to wake her up and started to talk like an insane man.

"Mama, wake up. Give me food. I'm hungry," he







sobbed. But she was dead. She would never wake up. That was a fact.

Then suddenly Cheeku stopped crying. Wiped his tears and ran. He ran and kept on running. He reached the beach and, defeated, fell on the sand. He wanted to escape and get away from this—from everything.

'What has life given me? Only suffering and more suffering.' A drunken father who beat him frequently. He had deserted them. His mother and he had lived happily for all those years. 'God, why have you done this to me? The only person I had in this world you have snatched away. What will I do?' and Cheeku started crying again.

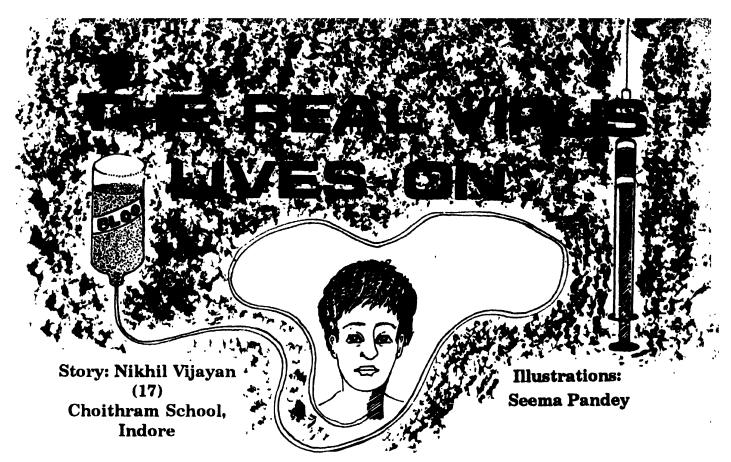
All the bitter memories came rushing into his head. That burning sensation in the stomach. The dirty looks of rich men. He had withstood everything, and now that tiny lamp was extinguished. His dreams were torn to shreds. He lost all hope. He fell on the beach. Resigned. Totally down and out.

Something sniffed at him. It was a small puppy, with bright, shiny eyes. Cheeku's face was full of streaks of dried tears. He got up as the wet nose nudged his cheek.

He saw a lost, forlorn puppy. Separated from his mother. Alone in the big city. Searching for a purpose in life. Looking for a support. He got up, picked the puppy and returned to his shack and thought about what name to give his dog. He had lots to do. After all he wanted to be a mechanic.

That day, Cheeku slept like thousands did. With pain and suffering but with a dream. Dreams kept people alive. Hope gave them strength to face what the next day would bring for them. A hope of a brighter future.

This was Bombay.
Bombay is a fast city.
You can't be unhappy or
happy for long. One must
take things in one's stride
and hope for the best the
next day when the sun
shall rise again, dispelling
the previous day's darkness.



R. SINGH'S family shifted to Kalyan Nagar in western Madhya Pradesh in June 1994.

Exemplary performance in academics and extracurricular activities helped the Singhs' only son, Raj, get admission to Kalyan Nagar's best school—St. Joseph's.

Within a week, Raj had adjusted to his new surroundings and had made friends with everybody in his class. He was an extrovert, with a pleasing nature, and was liked by all.

In September, Raj fell ill with prolonged fever. Investigations revealed that he was an HIV carrier. Apparently, this was the result of a blood transfusion that he had received after a car accident, about three years ago.

Somehow, his friends in school came to know that he had AIDS. When Raj rejoined school, he was puzzled. Friendly camaraderie had changed to hostile glances. There were whispers behind his back.

"Hey, that HIV guy is back!"

"Don't go near Raj, okay?"

"Why should I? I don't want to get AIDS."

Raj was hurt. He had never expected such ostracism. He became withdrawn and depressed to such an extent that he even contemplated suicide.

A few days later, Roshan, one of Raj's classmates, casually mentioned this incident to his father, who was a doctor.

"Dad, Raj has AIDS," he said. "We've become very careful now. We don't talk to him or even go near him."

On hearing this,
Roshan's father was
perturbed. "You are
wrong, my son," he said.
"Just by shaking hands
or talking to an AIDS
infected person, you are
not going to get AIDS.
The HIV virus can spread

in only three ways. Either through sexual contact with an HIV carrier, or through infected blood or needles, or from an infected pregnant mother to the child," he explained. "Since AIDS has no cure, these people need a lot of care and understanding. Raj needs your love. He should be treated normally," Roshan's father told him.

The next day, when Roshan reached school, he found Raj sitting all alone in one corner of the class. "Hi, Raj!" he said. "Mind if I sit next to you?"

"No, not at all," Raj replied, pleasantly surprised at the sudden friendliness.

"Have you prepared for the chemistry test?" Roshan asked him.

"No, not really. I wasn't feeling well last night," Raj said.

The other classmates couldn't believe their eyes. They had actually seen Roshan sitting next to Raj. During lunchbreak all of them surrounded Roshan.

"Hey, Roshan, you've really gone crazy," said Amar. "What do you think you were doing, sitting next to Raj?"

"Amar, we must all stop ill-treating Raj like this.



We are not going to get AIDS just by sitting next to him," Roshan said and then went on to explain to his friends, all that his father had told him the previous night.

But his friends were still wary. "No way," Vivek exclaimed. "I'm not going to risk my life for the sake of friendship with Raj."

Some days went by.
Everytime Raj saw
Roshan approaching, his
face would light up.
Roshan was his only
friend and companion.
Roshan, time and again,
tried explaining to his
classmates that it would
do them no harm to be
friends with Raj, but they
didn't believe him. On the
contrary, many of them
began boycotting Roshan
as well.

Meanwhile, Raj's health

continued to deteriorate rapidly.

A month later, Raj was admitted to hospital with severe pneumonia, a complication arising due to the AIDS problem. Roshan visited Raj regularly in hospital. However, Raj's other classmates were still sceptical and afraid of visiting him.

"Roshan, we are very grateful to you for all the help and support you've given Raj. He really looks forward to your visits," Raj's parents told Roshan during one of his visits.

"But, Uncle, I have failed. I have failed to clear the others' misconceptions... I pity them, Uncle... I pity them..."
Roshan said haltingly and then broke down.

(Raj diect on December 6, 1994.)

IGY JYO hated her name, she hated her age and she hated her younger brother. The entire world had conspired against her to make her unhappy. Even God had stooped so low, having sent her as the first born, Jigy Jyo often told herself. Mosquitoes chose to bite her the most, she had a sty in her eye, every fall and bruise was the deliberate effort of 'someone' to make her miserable. Why did mother have to kiss and cuddle Chhotta Bhaiya, while she herself was so

cuddlesome? Just a design on everyone's part to let Jigy Jyo down. Why did others find Chhotta Bhaiya's drooling blabber so cute? Why did they rush to help him all the time, to hold his hand as he took his first steps? All that Jigy Jyo wanted to do was to scream at the top of her voice, "Get out of my way, get out of my house, go get lost," but these words remained choked in her throat. Poor little Jigy Jyo could not have her way. She was being told to put and stir sugar in her cup of milk

and cut herself a piece of cake if she wanted any. Chhota Bhaiya sat like a lord, strapped to a high chair, being fed in turns by her mother and father. Oh! How Jigy Jyo despised him. She wanted to be a helpless little thing attended to by all the members of the household.

Jigy Jyo was eight and she had received all the attention as the first born. She had been the queen all these eight years. And then, flop! Out of nowhere this baby dropped down to snatch away her supreme

JIGY JYO

Story: Jigyasa Jyotika (14) Bhutan

> Illustrations: Seema Pandey



was well with the world or so God thought. He was humming to Himself when suddenly something wet fell on His hand. He spotted a pathetic face in His mirror begging Him to blace her in another family as a year-old baby. God smiled, shut His eyes and promptly our Jigy Jyo was dwarfed into a yearold toddler and put in another family. Since it was one of God's pranks, He could get along with it. You will soon know how. In the new family there

God was in heaven and all

In the new family there were two siblings older to Jigy Jyo. She looked at herself with great delight,

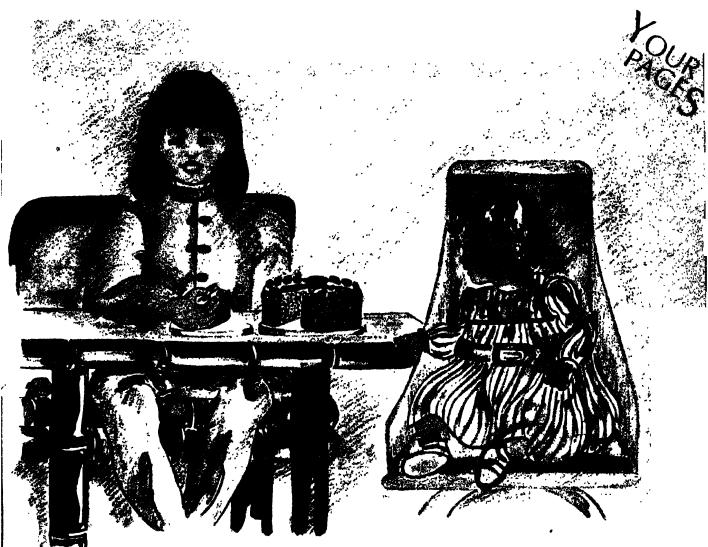
position. For a while Jigy Jyo had found the new toy great fun. But soon it dawned upon her, gradually and painfully, that he had come to take half of everything that she had - Mama, Papa, kisses, attention. Oh, attention! She could give up anything to exchange places with Chhota Bhaiya. How desperately she wanted to be the younger one in the family so that she could be doted upon, fussed and pampered, and helped and fed...

God was the number one enemy that Jigy Jyo had, or so she thought, for it was His idea to send her

as the first born. Yet when Jigy Jyo was utterly despondent she could not but convey her prayer, her heartfelt wish to God. Had she not seen Grandma do the same? After all God helps all those who are in despair, and maybe He was in a mood to rectify His mistake. So little Jigy Jyo prayed as hard as she could, "God! Dear God! Please God! I want to be reborn as a younger child in another family. O God! Thank you God!" A few tears rolled down her cheeks.

It happened to be a fine morning. Time was seven,





so cute and cuddlesome. It was tea-time. Her new mother took Jigy Jyo in her arms and seated her on a high baby chair. The other children were helping themselves to a huge chocolate cake. Jigy Jyo wanted to make a dash for it and would have liked to scoop a lot of nutties from the topping. But strapped as she was to her seat she could not move. She was served porridge with a rather ripe banana (she hated over-ripe bananas). She remembered that in her previous home mother always kept greenish -

bananas for her.

Jigy Jyo wanted to say a whole lot of things to her new mother but all that came out of her mouth was baby gibberish. At that her new mother gave her a big, wet kiss. No, it wasn't all that nice, thought Jigy Jyo as she wiped her cheek. But oomph! That chocolate cake. Her new mother was kind and a few crumbs were placed on Jigy Jyo's plate. Jigy Jyo muttered more gibberish but her new mother looked blank and kept staring at her fondly. Thank heavens! No more of those wet kisses coming.

The older children went out to play. Jigy Jyo was unstrapped and put down. She toddled along. Pitthu was being played in the compound. Jigy Jyo, who was considered the best pitthu player in her neighbourhood rushed to join one of the teams. Just then someone jostled her rudely.

A tall boy shouted, "Send the baby in, she will hurt herself."

Jigy Jyo's elder brother, seated her on the verandah so that she could



watch from a distance.

She wanted to scream, "Here you! Just try me out, then you'll see. Both the teams will covet me."

No one heard her. Who cares for a baby's gibberish anyhow. Mother came to see if she was all right.

Those awful, wet kisses! Jigy Jyo now decided that kisses were no great shakes. Then she pulled and tugged at her hair. She had been unhappy before, but had never ever felt so frustrated. 'Why, I cannot even communicate,' she thought. Suddenly she felt how unlucky

Chhota Bhaiya was—how small, limp, helpless and dependent. It was certainly much more fun to be on one's own—to frisk around and to play with friends, to be the pitthu champion rather than be strapped to a chair or to be seated on a stool.

A big drop rolled down Jigy Jyo's cheek. Yes, it was a tear. Jigy Jyo wanted to go back to her very own mother and Chhota Bhaiya. Immediately, instantly she wanted to be her eight-year-old self. Meanwhile God had dozed off and

woke up with a start as something wet fell on His hand (again!) from the mirror. He rubbed his eyes and saw Jigy Jyo's face. God's prank was eminently successful. He smiled, and in an instant Jigy Jyo was back home.

It was tea-time. Mother was shaking Jigy Jyo by the shoulder, "You have been sleeping the whole afternoon. Get up quickly. Your cornflakes is on the table. Help yourself to some chocolate cake and then go out to play. Your friends have already called twice. They won't play pitthu without you."

Jigy Jyo sprang from her bed. Her heart was as light as a feather. She was very hungry but she went first to *Chhota Bhaiya's* bed. He was still in deep sleep. She kissed him on both his cheeks.

As she helped herself to a slice of cake, she thought of tea-time with the other family and ... was it a dream? It had seemed so real. She had been on a visit to some other land and wasn't she glad to be back! She had returned a wiser and happier girl. As she grinned from ear to ear, the Almighty caught a glance of her in His mirror and smiled benignly.



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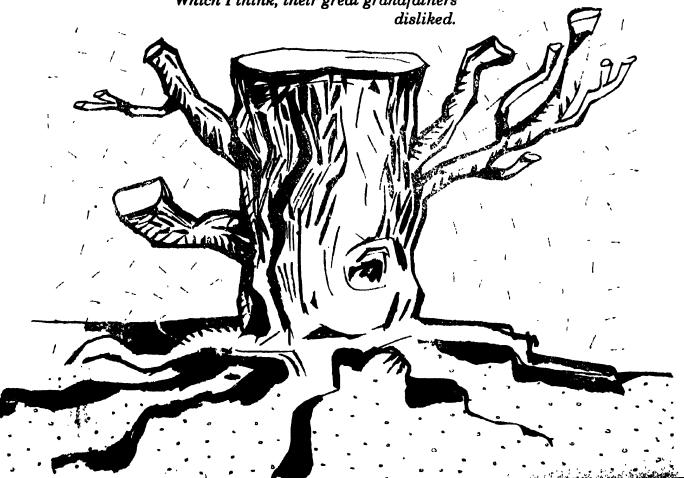
10 KCX

In Praise of those Trees

By A Tree of the 23rd Century Prachi Chaturvedi (13) Choithram School, Indore

I am a tree of the 23rd century,
I do not breathe, nor do I eat,
I want no water, nor any sunlight.
My branches are of thermocole,
And my leaves are of plastic,
I do not wave, nor do I oxygenate.
I am a model of Magnifera Indica
(mango),

Which became extinct in January 2004. I am now kept in the museum of Rome, To make the people of the world feel, How useful were those real trees, Which made the air pure to breathe, And not only made the earth green, But also gave us many things to glean. I am just a model, To tell the unlucky children, What those real trees were like, Which I think, their great grandfathers



PAGE

They cut them wantonly, without planting more.

They cut them at a fast rate, Without giving them any time to regerminate.

To fulfil their unnecessary needs,
They cut the forests with speed.
And then, with the advent of this century,
Instead of the lush green scenes,
Everybody saw the barren miles,
The water vanished so fast,
And everyone pleaded for the pure air to
last.

Now, men live on manufactured oxygen, And their life span is fifty years maximum. Oh God! the children of the 23rd century suffer a bad lot!

They haven't known how useful were the fruits of the trees.

And they will never ever breathe the true air,

And not even see the earthly green wonders,

Which were once the mighty Earth's pride, I am telling you the truth, believe me—not lies.



HE chhola bhaturas are nice, aren't they, Didi," said my sister putting some chholas into her mouth.

"Yes, very nice," I answered. "Actually, all the food served in this restaurant is very tasty."

My sister and I kept talking as we ate slowly.

"Will you two stop talking and eat fast?" Mother said. "It is already dark and you have to go home and study. Your exams start next month."

"Oh! Mummy, let us eat some more. We come to this hotel so rarely," my 10-year-old sister said to her.

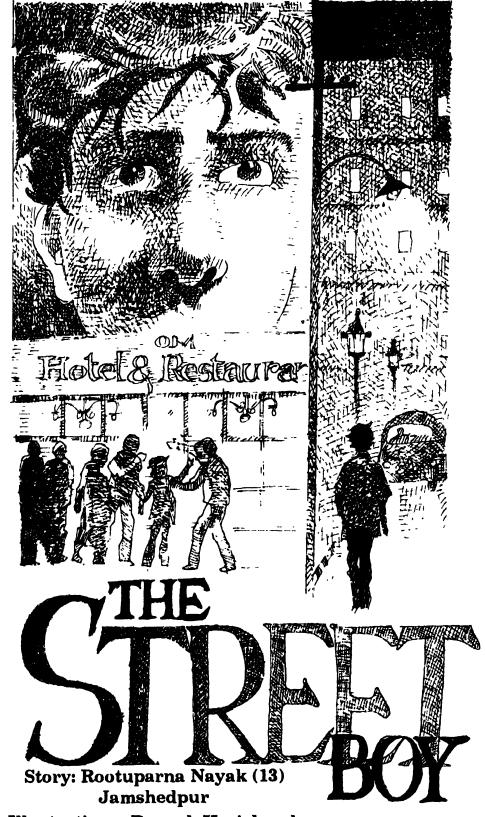
"No need to overeat. You are getting fat," commented Mother.

Just then there was a shout. We looked through the window behind us. A small boy, about 7-8 years old, was being beaten by a man. When the waiter came with the bill, my mother asked him what the matter was.

He said, "Oh! nothing very serious. He was just trying to steal some sweets from the table."

My mother paid the bill and we got up from our chairs.

We went out to where mother's scooter was



Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

parked. Just then the boy who had been beaten came and said, "Mai, can I wipe vour vehicle?"

"No." said my mother. The boy looked innocent to me. My sister started crying for an ice-cream. So we took her to the icecream shop and gave her a cup. She had made it a rule to have an ice-cream every time we came out of a restaurant. I thought that was the reason why she was becoming fat. While she was eating her ice-cream, I began watching the boy who was on the other side of the road now. He was scribbling something on the footpath with a stone. I felt very

After my sister finished eating her ice-cream, we went home.

sorry for him.

The next day I went to the restaurant on my cycle to buy some sweets, because an uncle had come visiting. I stood my cycle and crossed over to the other side where the restaurant was. When I came back, it had started drizzling. My cycle was wet. I didn't have a rag to wipe the seat. I looked around helplessly. The boy we had seen being beaten up the previous day, came and opened his fist. There, in his palm, was my gold ring.

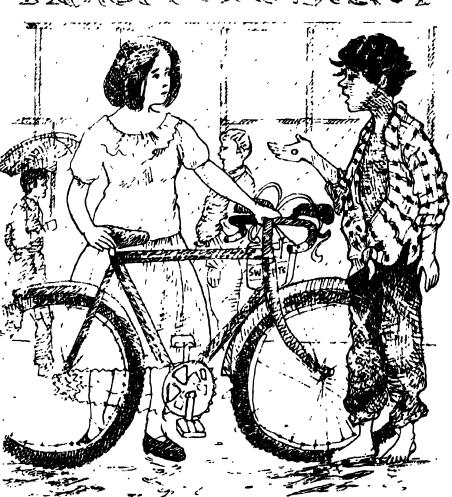
He said, "Didi, it slipped from your finger in the middle of the road."

I was surprised to see that the boy was so honest. I took the ring and thanked him. Before I could mount my bike, he wiped the seat with his dirty cloth. But I didn't mind. I smiled at him and was about to ride away when I stopped and called him. I searched my purse for a coin. But my purse was empty. So I took out one sweetmeat from the packet and gave it to him. He smiled at me and ran I M M C A A C TO THE SMILE OF T

away with it.

I had only gone a little distance when I heard a commotion. I turned back and saw a strong boy bullying the little one to whom I had given the sweetmeat. The bully had snatched the sweet from him and eaten it. I felt very sorry for the boy. I wanted to give him another one but the clouds above showed that it was going to rain heavily in a second. So I pedalled home quickly.

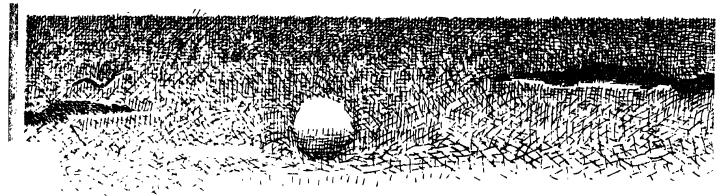
The next day was a



sunny one. I went to the spot where I had met the boy. But I didn't find him there. I asked the manager of a hotel nearby about him. He said that his family had taken

shelter elsewhere because it had rained very heavily the night before and their roof had collapsed because of the storm. I asked if he lived nearby. The manager nodded and said it was only a shack made of cloth and wood.

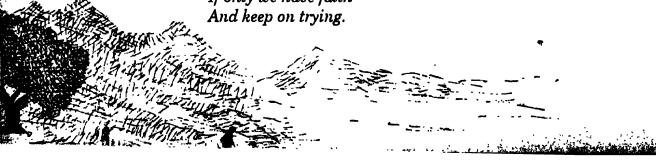
I went home quietly, feeling very sorry for the poor boy, and sorrier for myself because I could do nothing to help.

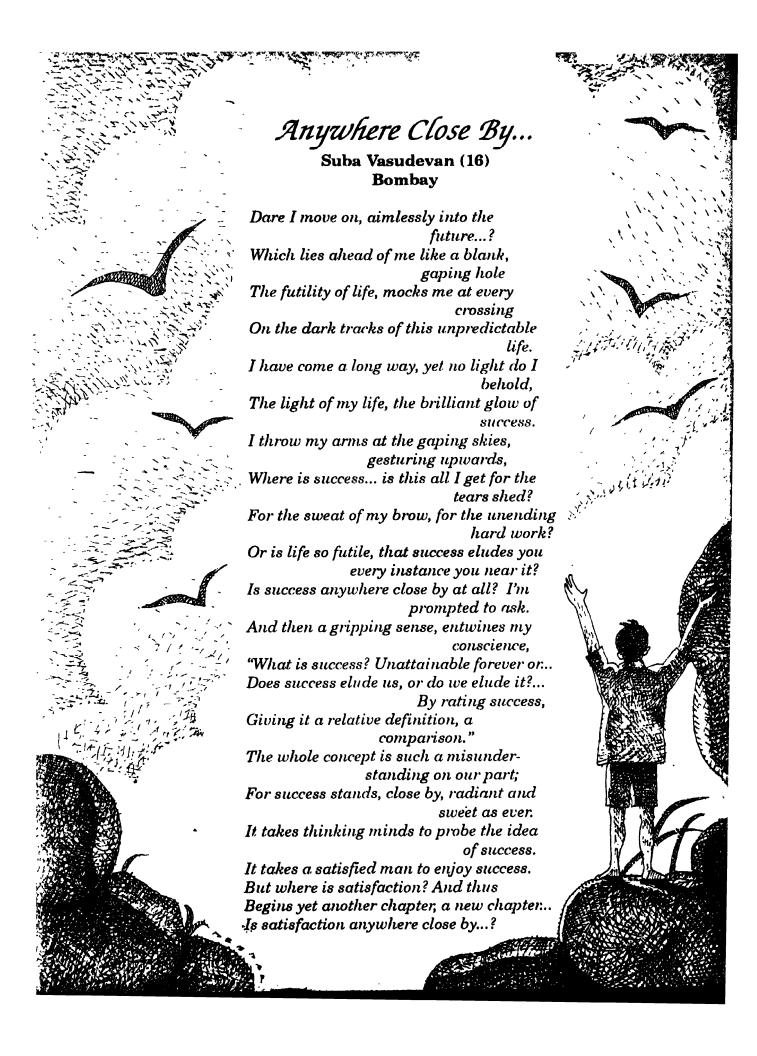


Things that seem to hurt

Rashmi Hemrajani (17) Choithram School, Indore

Sometimes the things That seem to hurt us the most Are the very things That bring out the best in us They are the struggles That help us discover —the faith We thought we had lost —the strength We didn't know we had —the courage To let go of the past Begin again Because challenges help us to see What we really are Whither do we want to go And what our lives can be, If only we have faith





Bhanjer's Pantomine

Story: Anirban Chakraborty (16)

Kharagpur

Illustrations: Chaitali Chatterjee

HO has not heard of Jatadhar Bhanja? The persuasive LIC agent who would sell his policy even to the most disinclined. In the township he is a familiar figure. He steps inside your house one evening with a smile on his lips. Before he sells his policy he makes you feel that life is as shortlived as a drop of water on a lotus leaf. But once the policy is sold, he will tell you that he has never lost a commission on account of his policy holder's death. Jokingly he says that he has a way of bribing the messengers of death who prowl with bludgeons on their shoulders.

There are, however, people who believe that a policy is of no use unless it is cut short by death. In fact the zero mortality rate of his clients has put him out of business. Uncle Bhanja's chief vocation now is story telling. He spends his evenings among the children of his clients and tells them engrossing stories in lieu of an evening meal or supper. He has told us dozens of stories and for my readers I shall narrate the story of how Uncle Bhanja fooled a group of college girls with his pantomime.

It was a winter evening when Uncle Bhanja was returning from his father-



After a long wait, the bus finally arrived. With great effort Uncle Bhanja threaded his way through the overcrowded bus to reach the rear. It was a Puri bound bus with all the seats occupied by college girls who were in no mood to share their seats with the standing passengers, most of whom were a rustic lot.

On the last seat five

young girls occupied the space meant for six. Uncle Bhanja found heated words being exchanged between the five girls and a person who insisted in vain on having the sixth seat for himself.

Uncle Bhanja gently tucked his small bag under the seat and waited in silence for the heat to settle. The road was bumpy and after the bus had gone a certain distance a sudden jerk tossed

the girls to one side and Uncle Bhanja sat down in the space available.

"Get off! You dirty fellow," they yelled in unison.

"Can't you see that we are respectable ladies travelling together?" asked one.

Uncle Bhanja wore a placid look and returned their shout with a simper.

"Can't you hear us?" Vacate our seat," cried the girl on his left. HOURS

With a hurt look he raised his hands and made gestures with his fingers spreading out five fingers first and six next.

For a moment the girls were puzzled and then one of them said, "He is dumb. But that does not matter. Then pointing her index finger at Uncle Bhanja she cried, "Oh mister, this is not the seat reserved for the handicapped. We girls want the seat for ourselves. Kindly get up and leave us alone."

The other passengers who were enjoying the drama booed her, saying it was foolish of her to try to speak to a deaf-mute. Only Uncle Bhanja flashed an apologetic smile and continued communication, mimicking the TV newsreader for the hearing impaired. He even paid the conductor his bus fare through gestures and by scribbling his destination on a piece of paper. Finally the girls gave up amidst comments from the standing passengers that it served them right.

Very soon the girls resumed their chatter. As Uncle Bhanja was so close, he could hear everything they said although the name of the engine and the rattling window



panes kept the other passengers out of earshot.

They were college girls living in hostels and the subject of their discussion was very private. They would have certainly blushed had they known that the person sitting between them was indeed eavesdropping, enjoying every word they uttered.

When Uncle Bhanja's destination finally arrived, the girls once again became eager to dislodge him from his seat. But Uncle Bhanja remained unconcerned and silently watched the disembarking passengers.

The girls nudged him and shouted in exasperation. Finally Uncle Bhanja

broke his silence, "Yes, I know my destination has arrived. It is a big town—the only one in West Bengal that boasts of an IIT. But, so what? The bus is to stop here for fifteen minutes, and I am in no hurry to reach home."

The girls were aghast. Stammering in disbelief, one said, "S-s-so you can speak and hear too!"

Uncle Bhanja replied, "Yes, I have enjoyed your free discussion on matters of great interest."

So saying he pulled out his bag from under the seat and, casting a tentative smile on the five heads hung in embarrassment, left the bus.

UNPACK the clothes

Sachu Miriyam Christopher (11) Alwaye

Take one letter from each box in a row to spell out an item of clothing. As a guide the first, SHIRT, has been indicated.

	1.	<u>s</u> um	AS <u>H</u>	SK <u>I</u>	ARK	$\underline{\mathbf{T}}$ RY	=	SHIRT
	2.	JET	JEW	JAW	NUT	BUS	=	
	3.	WAS	OAK	INK	IRE	TIP	=	
	1.	AGE	OLD	POT	IVY	BEG	=	
		SPY	SAY	ANT	ATE	ASS	=	
200	NA	HIS	ODE	CAT	ELK	SIP	=	
	<i>f</i> .	SON	COT	MAP	NOR	FAR	=	
\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \	√ 8.	ICE	ELM	ROT	RAT	SKY	=	
/	` 9.	SAP	SAT	sow	LIE	LET	=	
	10.	DEW ·	DRY	DEN	SLY	SUN	=	

Bedding Down

Solve these clues with words featuring a BED, as shown. The first one has been done for you.

1.	Mix	В	L	E	N	D	
2.	Cooked	В	-	•	\mathbf{E}	D	!
3.	Gowned	-	-	В	E	D	1
4.	Receded	-	-	В	E	D	-
5.	Drilled	В	-	-	E	D	:
6.	Exposed	В	-	-	E	D	
7 .	Stoops	В	E	-	D	-	
8.	Ornaments	В	E	-	D	-	
9.	Reproduce	В	-	-	E	D	
10.	Shed blood	В	-	E	-	D	



Amandeep Bharti (14) Lagos (Nigeria)

Love is not a state of mind It is a disease Its bonds do not merely bind They suffocate, not just tease When love shines, or seems to gleam Or seems to be the purpose of life Then things are just not what they seem For the glint is that of the blade of a knife Love may seem pretty, like a rose But this is a mirage, which will soon ·disappear

For the real truth, which everyone knows Is that beauty's only seen, the thorns are felt.

Love is a bottomless abyss of pain Easy to fall into, but hard to climb out And even if one escapes, the scars still

The footholds one sees, an illusion no doubt

Yet despite what we all know About these turbulent currents that flow Into their midst, we nevertheless go We get cut by its bonds

Become blinded by its glare We get pricked by its thorns



Ruchita Maru (12) Kota

Sea blue waves, splashing and twinkling, Colour makes the world so bright. African violets, smelling so sweet, Colour makes a dark day, light. Red blood, trickling from a cut Colour gives you a terrible fright Lovely silver moon, spacemen explore it, Colour lights up the darkest night.



PARENTS

D. Ranjani (16) Illustrations: Nilabho

Parents are a treasure.
Whose love we can never measure
At all times of leisure,
They bring me a lot of pleasure
Whenever I feel hurt,
They always come to support
And with every little effort,
They try to keep me in comfort.
Whenever I am depressed,
They help me to gain confidence,
And all my sorrows are suppressed.
And then I have no diffidence.
Parents bring immense joy
And they mean everything to me.

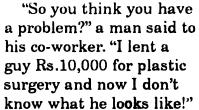


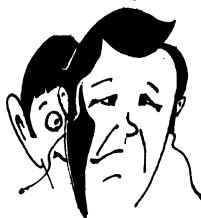
HAROLP AND "S

A passenger in a train compartment was chewing gum continuously. Facing him was an elderly woman who watched him attentively. Then she finally said, "It is really nice of you to chat with old women but I am hard of hearing!"



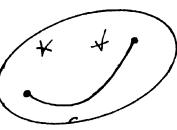
Hashim Malik (14) Choithram School, Indore













Proposition of the state of the

Diya Chakrabarti (13) New Bombay Illustrations: Subir Roy

As I look out of the window
I see the carefree sparrow
Hopping about cheerfully
Avoiding the cat skilfully
One minute he's on my window sill
The next he'll be standing still
Now he's on the ground
Busily trying to find his food
Probably a juicy worm or a piece of bread
For that's the best meal for a bird
He has no God, no religion
Nor is he worried about inflation
His delicate shoulders are not burdened by
responsibilities

Or uncountable duties
He fears not the cat at all
From his bold actions you can tell
He is not aware of corruption
He thinks freedom is the best notion,
Once it is evening and the sun will set
He'll go home to his nest
And come back in the morning
Only to leave in the evening
Although his life seems to be so
monotonous

He is lucky to be free and do as he wishes Looking at him I feel like breaking all bonds

And soaring in the high skies
Alas! I know
I cannot be a free sparrow
For I am a human and have my
commitments

To various important material things So I must live like a human being and do my duties

And the sparrow will enjoy its freedom unaware of my thoughts I should learn to be happy with what I have

To be able to live an immaculate life.







sun glinted through
the tear in the roof of her
shack. She sat up and
looked round at her
gloomy surroundings.
Another long and hectic
day lay before her. Just
then Sheela remembered
the happenings of the day
before. A minister had
visited the slum and had
made a speech in which he
said that all children,
whether rich or poor, had
a right to education. He
promised the slum dwellers that he would send
some men with admission
forms for their children, so
that they could go to
school.

Sheela recalled all this with an indescribable feeling of pleasure. Her heart filled with joy at the

thought of going to school and studying and playing with other girls of her own age. She would not have to do the endless jobs thrust on her by a slave-driver of a mistress, ready to beat her at the slightest excuse. Sheela remembered with a shudder how she had accidentally dropped a saucer and smashed it, thus inviting

the wrath of her mistress, who had beaten her with an iron rod.

She looked round the shack, holes in several places and containing only an old, torn rug (which served as a bed for the whole family), a mud pitcher, a few blackened pots and pans, and an old stove, barely having a flame now. Sheela glanced

YOURS

t her mother and her vounger brother, both fast asleep. Her father had died the previous year. Working in unsafe conditions, he had fallen from the seventh floor of the building he was whitewashing. So now Sheela worked all day long to help her mother, a maidservant, in several houses. Her three-year-old brother, though too young to do any work, was a ragpicker.

Sheela's mother woke and sat up in a hurry. Sheela cooked breakfast for her family, which consisted of glasses of tea and thin, lumpy porridge. After eating and washing up, she cleaned the shack, and left for work with a hope in her heart, that it would be her last day of work; that the next day she would be going to school.

Sheela left the slum and walked for nearly a mile and a half before she reached her destination. She climbed the stairs of a towering building and rang the bell of a flat on the fifth floor. The door opened and a woman came out. "You are late again! How many times have I told you to come before six?" she shouted. "It's almost a quarter past!"

"I...I..." Sheela faltered.

"Now take this and run down, and put it in the garage," said the woman, handing her a heavy box which probably weighed much more than Sheela. Bent under its weight, Sheela staggered down the many flights of stairs. Suddenly the box slipped from her hands and fell on her feet. She gave a cry of pain. The woman started shrieking, "Can't you carry anything without dropping it? Now pick it up! Fast."

Sheela stumbled down and returned after a minute or so.

"Why did you take so much time? There is lots of work to do."

And like everyday, Sheela started washing the huge pile of utensils and crockery. Her mistress's daughter came into the kitchen, yawning loudly.

"So you are up at last," her mother said as she put her daughter's breakfast on the table.

"I won't eat bread and butter, make me some sandwiches!" the daughter ordered.

"Not today, dear. I don't have any eggs or tomatoes in the house. Eat this."

"No!" The girl threw the thickly buttered bread on the floor.

Sheela looked at it lying there and thought how she slaved all day long, just for food.

"What are you staring at? Go and fetch some eggs from the shop."

"It is closed today, ma'am."

"Then go to the main market and buy some vegetables too, and return quickly," said her mistress handing her some money.

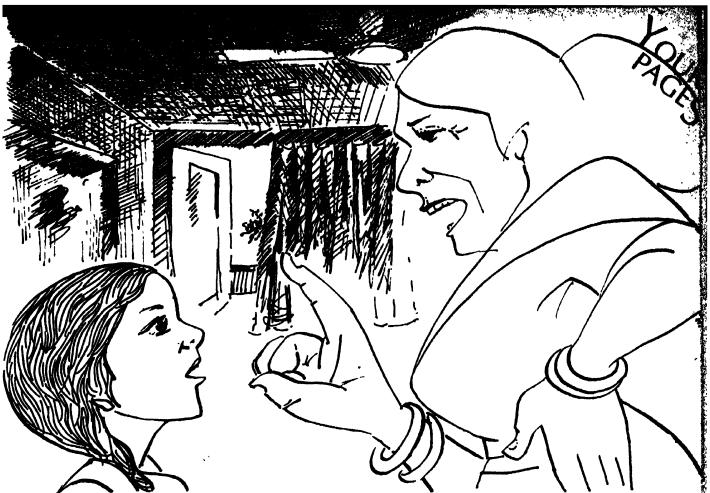
Sheela walked all the way to the market which was a good distance away. When she returned, laden with heavy packets, more work awaited her.

As she cut the vegetables, she glanced out of the window to see three girls, smartly dressed in their school uniforms, walking towards the bus stop. She daydreamed of how she would go to school in the same way.

A sharp slap on the head brought her back to reality and she stared at the uncut vegetables.

"You haven't finished yet? What are you doing, staring out of the window? Cut them quickly, then wash the utensils, clean the kitchen, sweep and swab the floor and then prepare a cup of tea for me," rapped her mistress.

As Sheela cleaned the floor where the buttered bread had left an oily



stain, she thought of how soon she would be free and going to school, instead of working so hard.

I'll soon be going to school,' she thought. 'The blue and white bus will pick me up and take me to school.'

After she had finished her work, Sheela went back home. She asked a girl who lived near her shack, "Did the admission forms come today?"

"No!" the girl replied.
"Mother says they never will, but they must! He promised us."

Sheela cooked dinner for herself and her brother. Soon her mother came in looking very haggard and tired. She lay down on the rug.

"What's wrong, mother?" Sheela rushed to her side.

"I'm not feeling well, that is all," her mother replied weakly.

"You must lie down,"
Sheela said as she covered
her with a blanket.

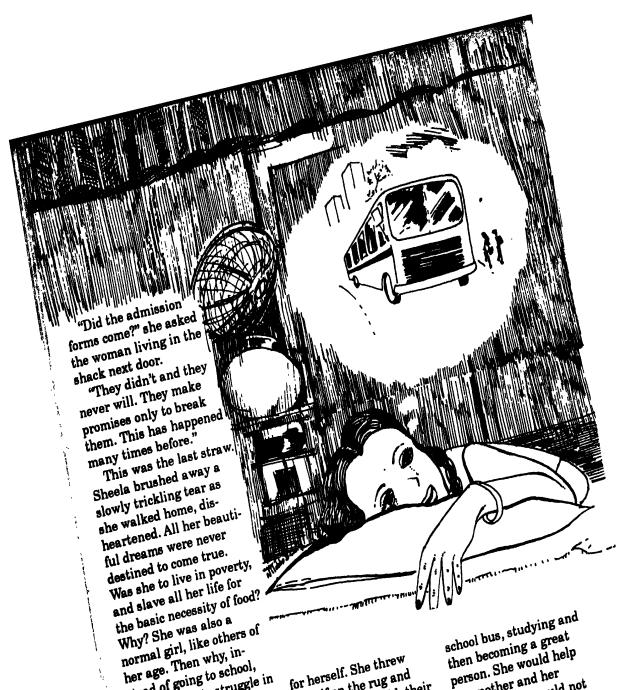
That afternoon Sheela did her own as well as her mother's work. After an unusually tiring day, as she was leaving, her mistress said, "You must stay for the whole day on Monday. We are expecting some guests."

"But...but, but I will be going to school!" stammered Sheela. "Who said you will be going to school?" asked her mistress scornfully. "It's not meant for street urchins like you."

Tears welled up in Sheela's eyes; angry tears, bitter and hot. "The minister said so!" she replied defiantly.

The woman gave a spiteful laugh and said, "Forget it and do your work! You can never go to school. Why, you! You have to slave all day long and dress in rags just to feed yourself and your family!"

Late that evening, Sheela trudged back home, weary and tired, yet with hope in her heart.



for herself. She threw herself on the rug and shivered in the cold; their only blanket covered her "Maybe the admission ill mother. These thoughts whirled

forms will come tomorrow," she consoled herself

as she wiped the tears that were now running freely down her cheeks. She imagined herself

going to school in the

then becoming a great person. She would help her mother and her brother. They would not have to work so hard either. She saw in her mind, the school bus stopping to pick her and take her to school...

Her eyes closed. Sheela was fast asleep. It had been a long day.

light she saw her mother and brother huddled together, fast asleep. Sheela did not have the strength to propere food

CHILDREN'S WORLD

NOVEMBER 1996

stead of going to school,

life and have so much

her young shoulders?

did she have to struggle in

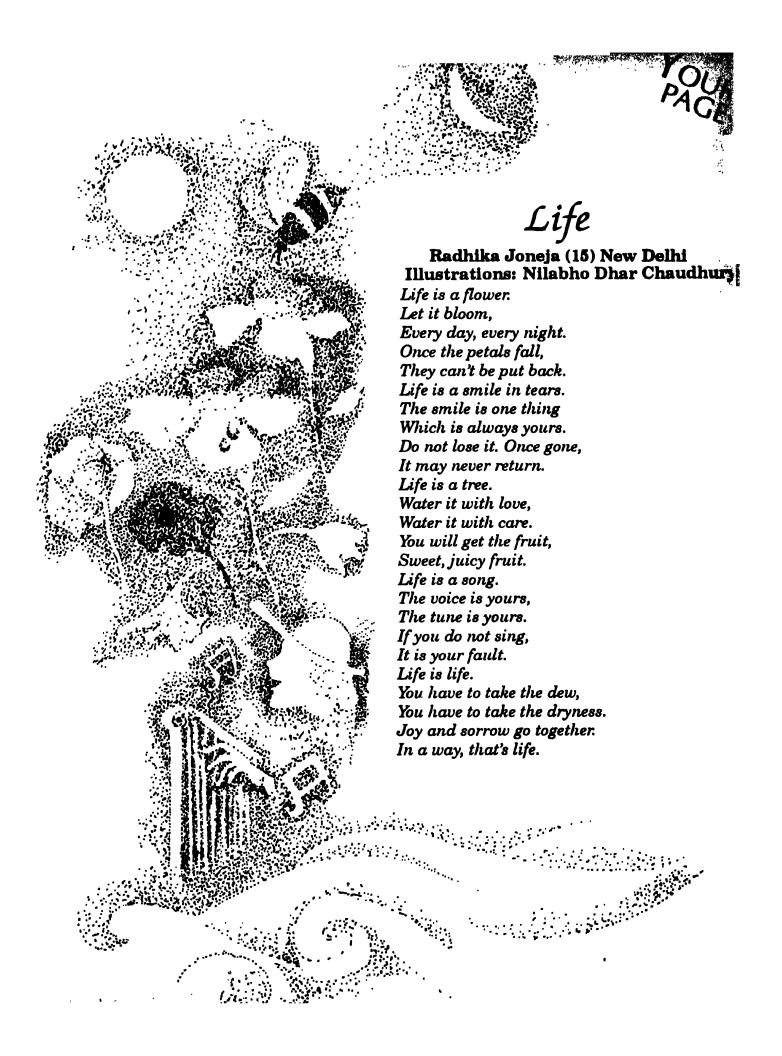
responsibility thrust upon

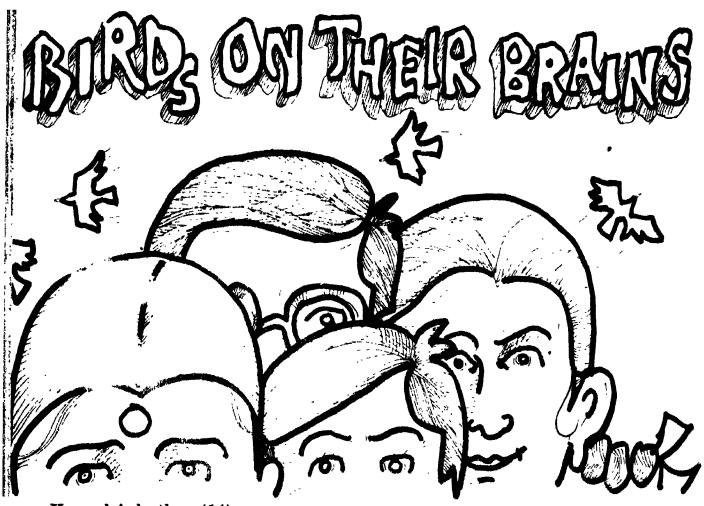
in Sheela's mind as she

stood before her shack.

She entered its darkness

and lit a candle. In its





Kannal Achuthan (14) Tuticorin

Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

Mom called out loudly. A faint sound floated into this so-called thick skull of mine. I raised my head, got off the bed and ambled along like a dog well-fed. (Hope this doesn't sound like poetry.)

"Yes, Mom! I'm coming," I replied running down the stairs.

"What took you so long? You just missed seeing a kingfisher," said my mother in an indignant tone.

"Yeah, Shruti! It was such a cute li'l one," said Sis.

My brother said, "The kingfisher was bright and colourful too!"

To top it all Dad said, "It was such a beauty, Shruti!"

I was ready to yell by this time. But wait, let me enlighten you about my family. There are families who are crazy about eating out, and there are families who are crazy about books and there are still other families who

are crazy about TV etc. But my family is crazy about birds. They've got birds on their brains. In short, they are bird-crazy. You have to only mention birds' and a long discussion on those dratted feathered specimens would be sure to follow. Once I just remarked that Vivek (my'dear, darling brother) had bats in his belfry and horrors. I had to listen to a long lecture on bats. No worlder I hated the class Aves!

Poor me! Why had I

landed in such a birdcrazy family? It was too much! Ma, Pa, Sis and even Vivek were "birdbrained". It seemed that I was the only down-toearth person in the whole family. Did I not learn enough about them in school, only to be drilled and grilled about birds at home too! Sis was called Bulbul at home. Mom had even thought of calling me Myna once, but I said a big, "No". Imagine what Yamuna and Sangeetha (my peers) would do, if they heard I was being called Myna at home!

Days passed. The much dreaded exams paid their regular visit. Yet Bulbul and Vivek wouldn't go out for their exams without saying 'bye-bye' to all the koels and sparrows in the garden and all the time, here I was, mugging History dates.

Soon the exams were over and holiday homework was given. We had to do a project on *Birds around us*. I went crazy, bonkers, crackers, nuts, dippy, potty—call it whatever you like. Wearily I reached home.

Sis and Bro were already home.

"Heh! I saw two beeeaters today," said Sis.



Bro, not to be outdone, said, "I saw a paradise flycatcher today. And then grinning slyly said, "Pity, it was a female."

There is only one thing which Sis and I agree on, that male chauvinists should be put down a peg or two. We began to cannonball Vivek with pillows and other handy items.

Later in the evening, I woefully announced my holiday homework—the

project on birds.

"Can I help you do it?" asked Vivek and Bulbul together.

"All right," I replied with a not-too-enthusiastic shrug of my shoulders. (You see, too much enthusiasm on my part might have revealed my real feelings.) "Of course I can do it myself; only, I may need a little help," I continued, secretly quaking with laughter.

So there was my

project, a few days later, all neat and complete with drawings and details right from the humble crow to the majestic Brahminy kite along with bright pictures of barbets, sunbirds, tailor birds, orioles and so many others. Even I let out a low whistle at the stuff spread before me. At school everyone admired the project. Yamuna and Sangeetha begged me to teach them how to birdwatch.

To my intense surprise I soon began to feel interested in birds too. Being born into a bird-crazy family, it became abso-

lutely essential for me to begin to like birds too. After all, the old proverb goes, "If you can't beat them, join them."

So it happened once again.

"Shruti! Come and see!" called Mom.

Sis said, "What a cute li'l kingfisher!"

"Wow! What colours!" exclaimed Vivek.

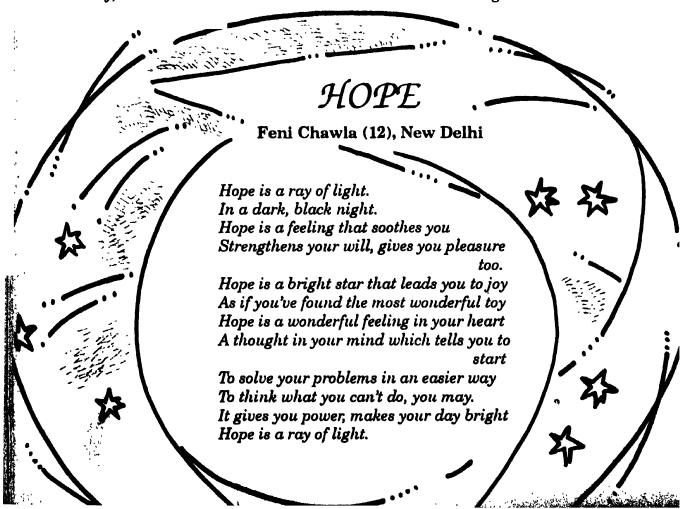
"A very nice one," said Dad gruffly and then another voice followed my voice—Shruti's voice...

"Superb! How nimble and quick he is!" The BC family turned and looked at me in amazement. I looked at the ceiling, bit my lower lip, rolled my eyes and said, "You might as well call me Myna. After all I'm part of the family."

And then the kingfisher flew out cackling as if welcoming me into the world of birds. Far away I heard the cooing of koels, screeching of parakeets and then peace descended into my heart. The brilliant kingfisher settled down on a branch.

"Shruti! Come and see!" called out Mom.

"Uh! Oh!" I said to myself, "here we go again!!!"

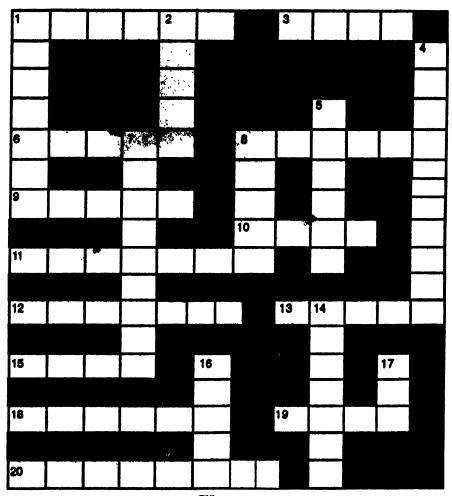




FEARS AND PHOBIAS Aditya Mahajan (15) Mandi

Everybody has fears and phobias. Let us find out what their scientific names are through this crossword.

Only the first part of the word is to be filled and 'phobia' is to be omitted. For example, the fear of water is hydrophobia. In the crossword you would have to insert the word hydro'.



Clues

Across

- 1. Fear of hair (6)
- 3. Fear of flying (4)
- 6. Fear of flowers (5)
- 8. Fear of cats (6).
- 9. Fear of crowds (5)
- 10. Fear of strangers (4)
- 11. Fear of snakes (7)
- 12. Fear of blushing (6)
- 13. Fear of wide, open

places (5)

- 15. Fear of dirt (4)
- 18. Fear of beards (6)
- 19: Fear of fire (4)
- 20. Fear of people (6)

Down

- 1. Fear of death (7)
- 2. Fear of water (5)
- 4. Fear of failure (10)

- 5. Fear of slime (6)
- 7. Fear of worms (9)
- 8. Fear of driving or
- vehicles (5)
 - 14. Fear of crossing
- bridges (7)
- 16. Fear of speaking
- aloud (5)
- 17. Fear of animals (3)



CHILDREN'S WORLD

Story:
Anvaya Ingle (17)
New Delhi
Illustrations:
Chaitali Chatterjee

S Shyam and Veena entered the dark little room, their eyes wandered from cradle to cradle, in search of a light which might bring a new dawn to their house. Finally, Veena's gaze rested upon a chubby, little baby. She moved towards if and something in the baby's angelic face called out to the mother in her. The vaccuum in her heart overflowed with love for the baby, as she tenderly fondled him. Shyam too liked the baby-boy. After a few weeks, the official papers were signed and Viraj became a part of their lives.

As a flower brings joy to the gardener who has tended it with love, so did Viraj make Shyam and Veena's life joyous. From teaching him how to walk, to talk, to worship God, to respect elders, and to be compassionate, they fulfilled the role of loving parents. They both agreed that Viraj had brought meaning to their lives. He was an intelligent and cheerful child, good at sports as well as in aca-

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demics. Every other day Viraj would bring home shields, trophies, medals and certificates, making his parents proud of him. Many a time Shyam and Veena wondered why his parents had left him. But as years passed, they forgot that Viraj was not their offspring and Viraj never got to know the truth.

Viraj was now a teen-

ager, an age when children prefer to be left alone. Well aware of adolescent desires, Shyam and Veena encouraged him to take his own decisions. By and by, Viraj grew independent. Pleased at breaking away from parental authority, he led a very busy life. with parties, discos, late nights, cars and girlfriends, all becoming a part of it. He also tried his hand at smoking and drinking. Sensing that his son was taking undue advantage of his freedom, Shyam imposed some strict rules-no late nights, parties only thrice a week, no going to discos. no smoking and so on. As his parents had never interfered in his affairs before, a bitter resentment filled Viraj's mind, and he started avoiding his parents. He did not realise that all this was



for his well-being. Viraj thought his parents were being cruel and unjust.

It was at this time that Shyam and Veena decided to tell their son about his past, little realising what effect it would have on him, at this stage. Viraj listened to what they had to say numb with shock. After some time he felt angry at being left in an orphanage, at not knowing who his real parents were. 'Abandoned'. 'Adopted'. Those words for him meant 'unwanted'. Viraj forgot all those happy days of his childhood spent with his foster parents, the love and care they had bestowed upon him, and the gratitude he

should have felt for them. All he remembered were the times when they had scolded or rebuked him, forbidden him from doing certain things. Blinding hatred coloured his vision.

The trust which he had put in them was shattered. Now, only a wall of bitter resentment remained between Viraj and his parents. His temper was short and he used to fight with Shyam and Veena every day. Till finally, fed-up with his stubborn attitude, the final outburst came, one day.

Viraj shouted, "Yes, if I had been your real son, you would have bought me a new C.D. But no, I'm

adopted, isn't it?"

To which, Veena, in tears, tried to reassure him that he was her own son.

"I wish somebody else had adopted me. At least I would have been better off."

Shyam shouted at him in return, "Viraj, stop that! You are making your mother cry."

"She is not my mother and you are not my father. I am not your son. I don't care."

A sharp slap across his face stopped any further torrent of words. It was Veena. "Is that the way to talk to your father? Go to your room and stay there till you are ready to apologize!"

As Viraj angrily stomped off, Shyam and Veena wondered whether they had made a mistake.

Not wanting to be under any obligation to his adoptive parents, Viraj decided to run away from home. While he walked aimlessly on the streets, a poor boy came upto him, begging for money. He was shabby in appearance, wore no shoes, his clothes were torn and he was extremely dirty. His left arm was bleeding profusely.

Viraj, who could not



bear to see anyone in pain, bandaged his arm with his hanky, thus befriending the beggar-boy. The poor boy told him everything about himself. He too was an orphan, but his parents had left him on the streets, and not in an orphanage. He survived on the money that he earned from begging. He would have liked to go to school, but circumstances forced him to beg. It hurt

his self-respect, but he had to survive.

At that moment Viraj realised how lucky he was; and what his parents—real and adoptive—had done for him. A flood of memories made Viraj slowly retrace his steps in the dark . back to the only home he had.

The sun rose the next day and with the new dawn, a new light flooded the house.





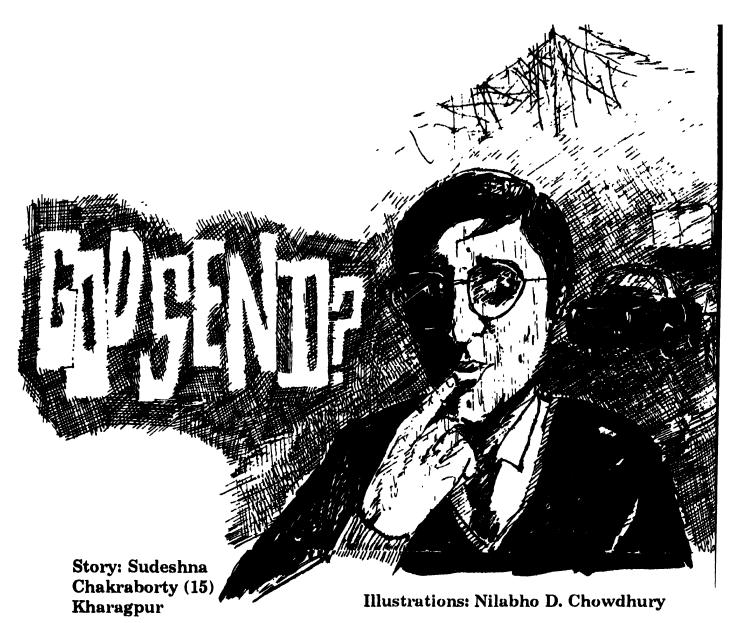
DREAM

Sumit Roy (15) Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury

Dream, dreams Q sweet dream
Oh how happy you seem
Let me hold you a moment longer
And not let you flee again
But you will alip away surely
Only I'm trying in vain
You come in the dead of night
When the world is engrossed in sleep
You approach silently and stealthily
And in the dark corners of the mind you
peep

To enliven and enlighten The memories long forgotten You accompany us the whole night To our journey in the past And just when dawn sets in You escape, quiet and fast Leaving behind a gleam of hope With our sweet memories to cope: You are not just the mind's imagination You're simply the loveliest of creation You're the entrance to the world of fantasy You are the long key to unbounded ecstasy When our life seems hopeless And Existence a burden You come to our rescue And our spirits brighten I love you, I savour you; I need you, my

friend
I want you to accompany me till the end
I beg you, my friend, to leave me never
Leave me when I'm gone forever, forever



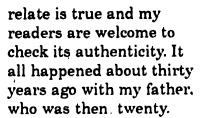
Y READERS probably do not believe in ghosts, but I do. I believe that the soul is an empyreal, imperishable substance which continues its existence even after leaving the physical body. Like many theories which are sed on concepts unfamiliar to us in our daily life, the indestructibility of the soul and its union with the cosmic one is a subject too subtle to

be brushed aside. Although no mathematical or scientific studies have been made on it, seers have had glimpses of this other world. According to them, souls are like bubbles that are formed and destroyed continually, just like they do on stirring a soap solution in a wash tub. The primordial solution is the cosmic soul and the bubbles are the basic units that make our hearts beat, our lungs

work like a pair of bellows and our limbs function in the way we like.

It is often said that with the progress of science and technology, ghosts have become a vanishing tribe. But the common man still wallows in superstition, looking for a panacea either in a talisman or a godman. My question then is, what moral right has one to lay aside a ghost story with cold contempt?

The story I am going to



Being the eldest of the three, the entire responsibility of running the household suddenly fell on my father's shoulders after my grandfather was killed in a road accident. My grandpa was returning home from an official trip when the bus he was

travelling in, went out of control and jumped off a bridge into a river, in spate, sixty feet below. There were few survivors, with most of the bodies, including my grandpa's, being swept downstream into the Bay of Bengal.

My father had just received his bachelor's degree when the accident took place. A month later, my father received a letter from my grandpa's employer at Jamshedpur

asking him to appear for an interview on a certain date in case he was interested in a job. Even inthose hours of sorrow, it brought a ray of hope and a moment of jubilation in the family, and my father decided to go.

Preparations were made and new clothes were stitched, for my father did not have any fit for the occasion. Shoes were bought. He was excited, for it was after a long time that he was going out of his oppressive North Calcutta residence on such a long railway journey.

The day of the interview finally arrived. The

train was at 5:30 in the morning from Howrah, and the interview was scheduled sometime before noon on the same day. It was December, the very dead of winter. Excited as he was, my father spent most of the previous night sleeplessly, but fell into a deep sleep a few hours before daybreak.

He woke up with a shudder when he heard someone knocking at the door. He looked at the table clock which showed that the alarm had rung but had failed to wake him up an hour ago. It was now five o'clock, with only half an hour to catch the train. Cursing himself, he opened the door only to welcome a gust of cold, winter wind. Dismissing the sound that woke him up as the imagination of his perturbed mind, he hurriedly dressed and bolted out of the house within a few minutes.

As he went out to the street, he heard the idling of an engine. A cab was waiting at the crossing that met their narrow lane. A Sikh driver opened the cab door as he approached and drove him straight to Howrah station. My father thanked him, called him a godsend and remarked, "It is so



strange! As if you were waiting for me and you knew my destination!"

The driver replied, "Of course I was waiting for you. Did you not send someone for me?"

"Send someone? What did he look like?"

"Why, he was a middle aged man in white dhotikurta. But it was remarkable that he braved the cold with no winter clothes on. He even seemed to be freshly bathed though he looked pale and sallow."

My father had no reply, for who would believe that his dead father had run errands for him. Months later, however, he took a day's leave from his new position and took a trip to Gaya to pray for the sternal peace of my grandpa's soul.



And Just Like Them

Tamanna Ahuja (17) New Delhi Illustrations: Subir Roy

There, These waves Have Once again Conquered the shore. As if pouring out The long lost Love and desire To meet again. And then they leave the sand behind, Just like ... Mine Own heart. Where else in the depths Would they seek `A permanent home? And just like them Thou art! When Morn awakes me 🙇 Out of my Profoundest sleep, When the sunshine filters Through the mango grove. When the moist clouds Bring Thunder and rain, And when they fall On a joyful land, ...The croaking of .. A little frog ... Amplified! ...In other words, Happiness, Comes back To me Again and again,



And I am happy

...today.

Answers to Fears and Phobias

(See page 65)

(See page 00)											
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Where Not Poetry?

Apala Majumdar (13) New Delhi

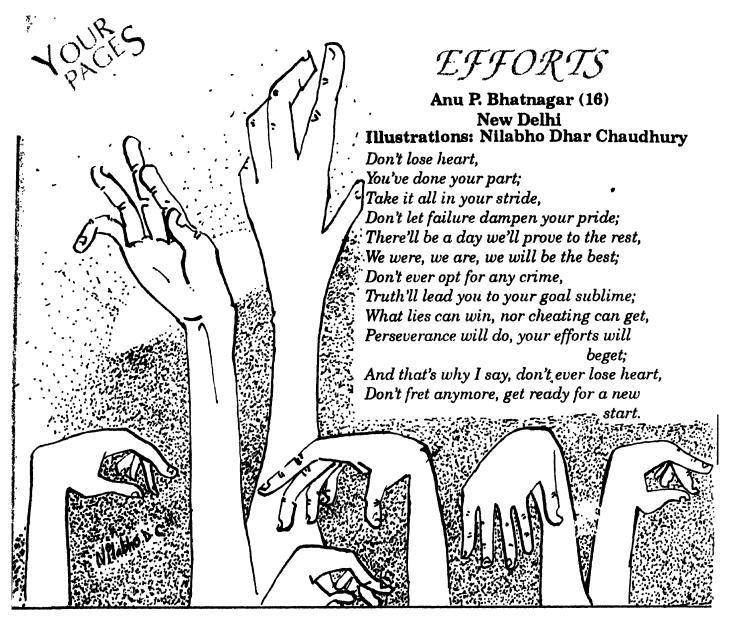
When the birds begin to chirp,
There is poetry.
When the flowers bloom,
There is poetry.
When bunches of red roses fall,
Then there is poetry.
When the goddess Spring spreads her
mystic hymn,

Blooms every corner of the earth And fills her with fragrance, Then too!

When fountains sing their melodious song, Poetry, though not charmed, still stays But poetry does go away, When purity of the heart sinks, When freedom and love become fear, And silently the eyes close.

This is my end—death; I will not die anymore. I will not live anymore, All I will do is to lie in the coffin, Waiting for poetry who had betrayed me But poetry will not come, She is long gone, She will never come back to me! My coffin will rock, And fall into depths of solitude Where no beam of sun shines, Where no moon weeps, Where no wailing of the dead reucl All that there will be. Will be eerie silence. A heartbreak. A lonely, wailing soul,

Pining away for poetry!



Answers to Unpack the Clothes



- 1. Shirt
- 2. Jeans
- 3. Skirt

- 4. Glove
- 5. Pants
- 6. Socks

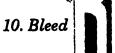
- 7. Scarf
- 8. Cloak
- 9. Stole
- 10. Dress

Answers to Bedding Down

- 1. Blend
- 2. Baked
- 3. Robed

- 4. Ebbed
- 5. Bored
- 6. Bared

- 7. Bends
- 8. Beads
- 9. Breed



For your precious little girl.



FEATURES:

- An open-ended plan.
- Minimum investment of Rs.1500/and in multiples of Rs. 500/thereafter. No upper limit.
- Any individual, state govt., central govt., trust, society, corporate body can invest for a girl child up to 5 years of age.
- Investment of Rs. 1500/- made at birth of child may become
 Rs. 21,000/- in 20 years. Quantum of growth depends on age at entry.
- Date of maturity will be calculated from the date of acceptance of the application.
- Bonus, if declared periodically, will be payable on maturity.



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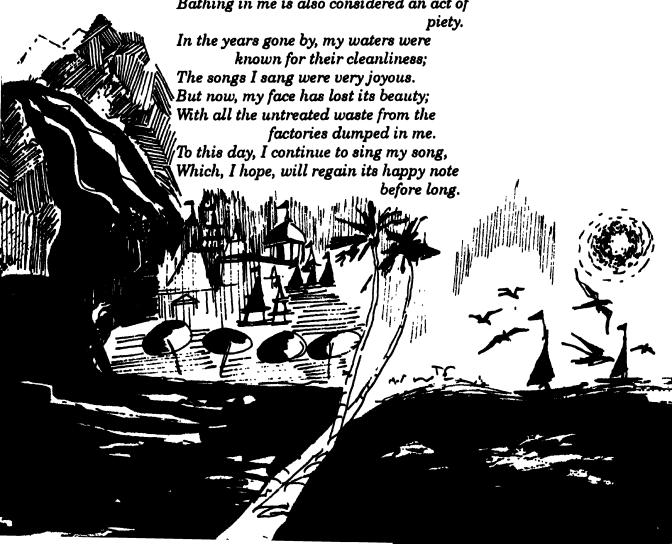


THE GANGA

S. Sri Devi (17) Visakhapatnam

I am a river of considerable might;
I present viewers with a charming sight.
In the Himalayas is my origin;
I wind my way merrily through many a region.

Till I reach my destination;
My waters surging towards the ocean.
I am joined, in the course of my journey, by
many tributaries;
And I, at the end of my trip, divide into
manifold distributaries.
Along with the great Brahmaputra.
Swimming in my waters is a pleasurable
sport for many;
Bathing in me is also considered an act of



HAPPINESS

Neha Toteja (15) New Delhi

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury

Happiness is achieved, not by wealth or monetary gain,

Not by power, kingdoms or reigns
Not by authority, influence or a well-lined
purse,

But by kind words and actions, no cause for remorse.

In happy and joyful pleasant deeds, Donation, charity, fulfilling others' needs Selflessness, stoicism, charity, generosity Honesty, sublimity, devotion and simplicity.

To feed an orphan in a day of famine,
To be pleasant to others who are one's kin,
To free a captive, to break his chains,
With the strength of bare hands or with
canes.

To be like a tree that gives fruit
Which explores the ground, strengthens its
roots,

Which stays in the sun and suffers the heat.

And gives shade to men while they rest and

Happiness lies in helping old women and

In educating the illiterate and small children

In helping a blind man cross the street
In starving yourself and letting others eat.
For each bit of happiness we give away

Fruition comes our way

And brightens our day

Because felicity like a perfume spray

Stays in the air,

It is always there.

And in spreading joy to others,

Graciously helping our brothers

Its intensity is multiplied,

And happiness stays by our side;





10/190



Pranjal Goswami (17)
(Dedicated to the memory of my cousin, Maina, who died, aged 3 months)

Illustrations: Nilabho Dhar Chaudhury

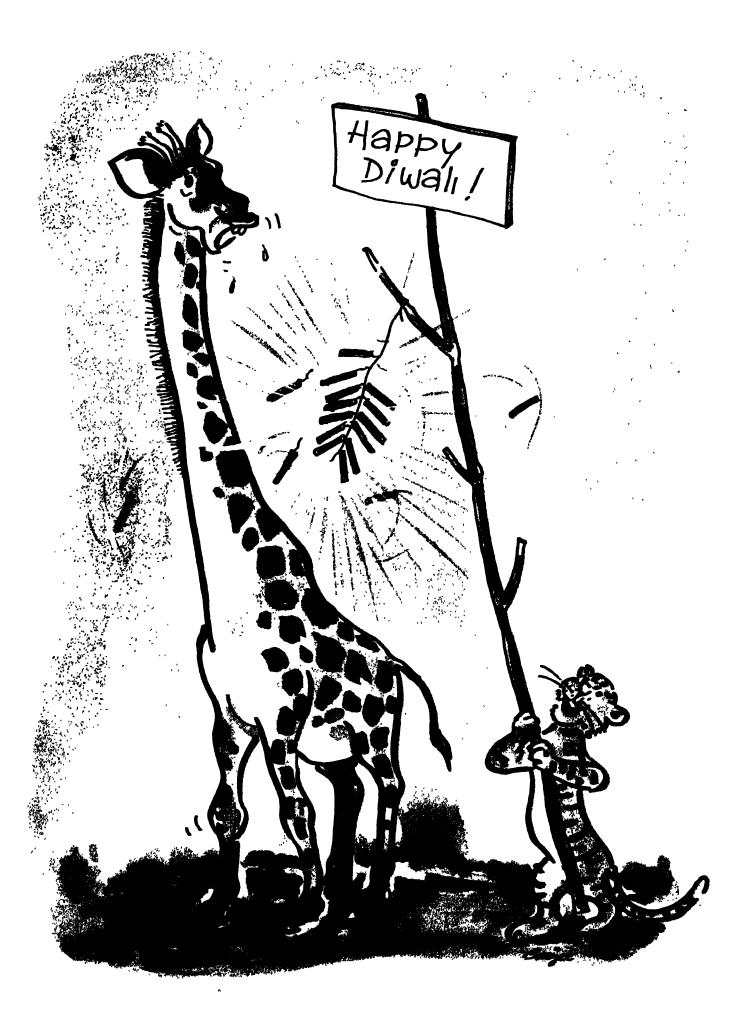
Tender smells still caress my senses
And tears press hard,
The heart feels as if it is being
Crushed, torn, broken apart.
The happy memories of happier days
Hurl sorrows with renewed vigour:
My being racks in great anguish
As the mind recalls the little, delicate
figure,

Numb I feel with sadness
Cruel indeed is Fate!
The mind is still submerged in grief,
To it, nothing else does relate.
Inspiring smiles, even in morose men;
Wondrous creature of innocence
Filling fortunate company with gaiety
With her smiling, gleeful, gurgling
presence.

So pleasant were those days,
Brimming over were we, with joy
Who would have expected such a delusion,
Fate's cruel, wicked ploy!
Why did she ever enter our midst?
Give us such wonderful memories in good
measure:

Suddenly did leave, the little angel,
Leaving us only her gifts to treasure.
Time has flowed since she left us
But embedded still remains the sadness;
Time — great healer, I doubt if you can
Ever heal this emptiness.
Every smell, sight, sound of her remains
And with it the pain,
Consoling ourselves,
Those whom the gods love, die young.





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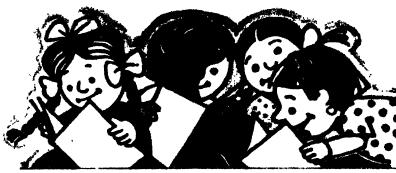
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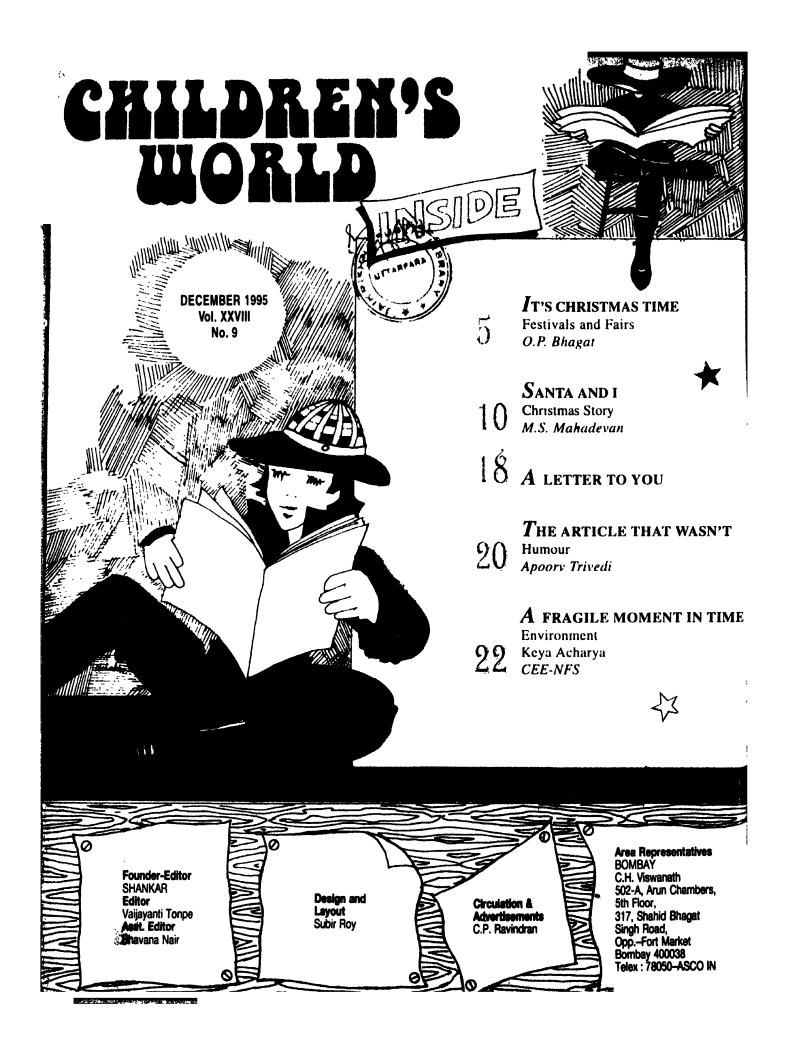
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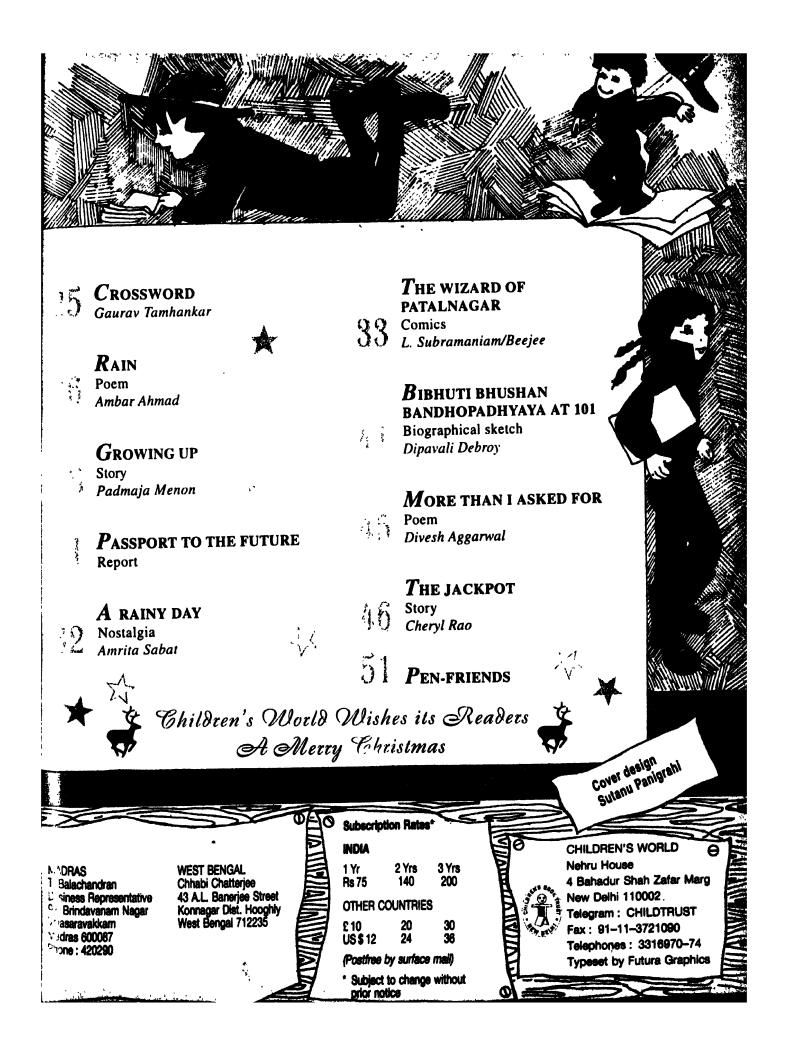
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Dear Editor...

I have recently become a fan of *Children's World*. I did not know about it till I saw it in my school library. When I saw the magazine's Pen-friends column, a greed arose to enrol in it. So I asked my friend to get me one copy. I was really amazed to see

Winter is supposed to be cold and dreary with dark nights. Winter to me, has always been mellow sunshine dancing in through stained glass windows to form warm patterns on the floor in the Chapel of the convent where I began schooling many, many years ago. Strange isn't it, that I should have been there only from KG to Class IV, but carry this as a lasting impression of winter, right through my adult years? So much so, that last December I actually undertook the journey again to that small town to see if the little girl that was me, still lurked about to gaze at the patterns of sunshine! As we drove through the town I was relieved to see that for all the signs of modernity that the 90s had brought. the town had not quite forsaken its own 'Nature is predominant' character. Then into the school, and the hushed precincts of the school's chapel. And the

the huge number of penfriends. I was also very affected by the amount of reading material. I really enjoyed reading it. It was great fun. I now read this magazine regularly and enjoy myself.

> Abhishek Gupta New Delhi

CHILDISH!

My name is Ashish Daniel and I am a class XI

joyful heavens be praised for some unchanged aspects of life! Not only was the chapel exactly as I remembered it—not only was the mellow. December sunshine casting the same wonderful patterns through the tall, stained glass windows—but there in the corner was the pageant of Nativity laid out exactly as I remembered it from my own younger days! The immense thrill at that sight, the immeasurable joy that suffused me with its warm glow is indescribable. It had nothing to do with religion or religious beliefs—and yet it was a moment of divinity—that a scene from the past could startle you many years down the lane with its very sameness. Over the years you also realise that such a feeling of purity comes only rarely and only on tiny occasions when you have been able to rise above yourself. When you, very naturally and without

student in St. Columba's School. Though Children's World is a little childish for a person of my age, I just can't help reading it because I just love the type of stories published in it. I've been reading Children's World for around two years now.

Ashish David New Delhi

rear rleaders

forethought, give away a sweater you no longer fit into, to someone who would be grateful for its warmth. When you put out tentacles of kindness to embrace a pained soul who could do with love's warmth.

As you go along in life, you realise it is not stained glass windows and sunshine alone that go on to make for winter's warmth, or Nativity scenes and Christmas itself that help you spread cheer—but the tiny kaleidoscope of memory locked forever inside of us-that shapes and patterns our feelings of warmth and good cheer, of felicity and kindness, of goodness and forgiveness. Christmas and winter are here, folks! Make the most of it. Spread out the cheer and dole out the warmth...

> Merry Christmas and Happy reading!



ANY SHOPwindows wear a new look. You see cotton-wool snowflakes or cute snowscapes, with small or symbolic Christmas trees.

Also figures or cutouts of Santa Claus. Red-robed and radiant-faced, he has his bag of gifts slung over the shoulder. He rides a sleigh here and there drawn by reindeer.

In other windows, gifts are displayed—toys, tea sets, snazzy sweaters and music systems. Inside are a lot more gifts and novelties.

For those who love to bargain, stalls have cropped up everywhere. They too offer a variety of things. These rows or clusters of stalls have come to be known as Christmas bazaars.

In pastry shops you see some samples of Christmas cakes. Also of sweets, cookies and bread rolls.

We almost forgot Christmas cards. They are on sale everywhere. Some of the motifs are traditional—robin, snow, stained-glass windows, crib, star that guided the 'wise men', Santa Claus...

The new designs range from comic strip-like faces to eye-catching camera cameos. There are handpainted specimens as well.

Pictures of flowers like roses are in plenty. Next come Indian themes—peacocks, coconut trees, bullock carts, Bhangra dancers, even Meera singing before an image of Krishna!

Many people are statistics crazy. They keep a count of almost everything. But none has told us yet how many Christmas and New Year cards are sold every December.

That lots of them are sold is clear from the number of stalls and the crowds of buyers there. And from the special arrangements the post offices make to deliver them.

As you know, Christmas celebrates the birthday of Christ. He was born to poor parents about two thousand years ago. But he taught people to love one another and live in peace.

At first not many listened to him. The Romans, who ruled the land he was born in, even punished him by crucifying him.

Then, slowly, many realised the truth of his teachings. They became

the followers of his faith— Christianity.

The date of Christ's birth is not certain. But December 25 was fixed as the day of his birth.

At this time of the year Romans and other people of Europe had their own gay festivals. In time, all came to celebrate Christmas instead.

Many Christmas customs are the customs of these different believers but in new forms. In Rome it was the merry festival of Saturnalia. In nothern Europe it was the Odin story. The god brought his worshippers gifts in the chill of winter.

Christmas is one of those festivals which is celebrated round the world. So the Christmas fervour is everywhere.

People decorate their homes. At one time evergreens like ivy, holly and mistletoe were commonly used. Now, in towns and cities, new decorations have to a great extent replaced them.

But the old Christmas tree is everywhere. If it is not an evergreen, it is artificial. It is hung with lights, toys and presents.

People exchange gifts with their friends and relations. And they eat and drink as best as they can. As an old rhyme says:





ATT IN A PROPERTY AND

but once a year.
Christmas has its own
music. Carols at ence
come to the mind. There
are other hymns and
songs as well as nativity
plays.

Mirth is also there. At one time it was boisterous. Now it is within limits.

There are Christmas pages and cartoons, glost stories and other interesting fare in the papers.

But the festival is not all fun. It has its pious or serious side too. People go to churches and pray at home. They also try to help the less fortunate.

Christmas Eve is one day children eagerly wait for. They hang their special for Santa Claus to fill with gifts.

. He had a broad face and a little round belly, That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly.

Who is this comic and kindly character? Some say that he was real. Others say that it was just an idea which fancy draped as a saint—a patron saint.

Whatever the truth may be, Christmas would lose much of its charm without Santa Claus.

Experts have pieced together his story. It goes back to the fourth century St. Nicholas. He was originally a bishop. But he saved some children from dire situations. Hence his association with kids.

The saint underwent a change in the Middle Ages. The gift-giver was reduced to a clownish, red-faced figure. But this only

made him more popular.

In America further change awaited him. It is there that he got his familiar outfit of Father Christmas. Also the reindeer sledge. For, it was believed, he came singing "jingle bells, jingle bells" from the North Pole.

Now and then we read in the papers about donors who quietly helped a poor boy or girl. Some Trusts and individuals play Santa Claus in other ways. They give sweets, toys and clothes to orphans and slum kids.

You may also do it in your own way. For that you need not wear a white beard and a red robe and not spend much either. You can bring cheer to a poor child with a single lollipop. Or give comfort to his cold, numb feet with a pair of socks.

Father Christmas is not just to be met with at children's parties. He is also within you. Bring him out.



One minute more

With December ends the year. So does this series. In these 12 months we saw many celebrations. But they are not all the festivals and fairs we have in our vast land.

Most of those left out are regional—in some or the other part of the country.
The tribal festivals have not been touched either.

This series is just an introduction to the festivals and fairs. For more

information you will have to read books. There are many books on the subject. A few are meant for young readers.

Or you may read the features on festivals that appear in papers from time to time. Your elders will also tell you a lot about them.

But the best way is to observe or take part in he celebrations. If something is not clear to you, you should ask your parents or others.

Behind every festival or fair is a story. Sometimes more than one story. This makes them more interesting than they seem from their bustle or gaiety.

So while you learn something about festivals, you also learn something about your country, about its history, about its beliefs and about its culture.

It is an interesting quest. Begin it, and you will enjoy every bit of it.

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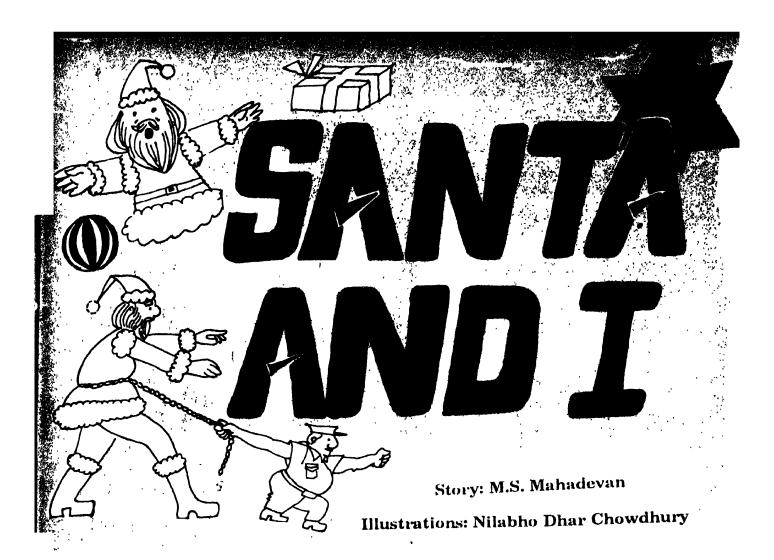
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NFLUENZA," was Dr. Alphonso's verdict. "You'll have to stay in bed for a

Patrick, my elder brother, sat up with a jerk. "I can't do that," he said.

"Why not?"

"I can't," cried Patrick wildly. "I am Santa Claus."

Dr. Alphonso gaped at him. "You are what?" he asked carefully.

"Santa. Father Christmas." Patrick sank back onto the pillow and closed his eyes.

"Not to worry,
Mrs. Devaraj," said
Dr. Alphonso quietly to
Ma. "A touch of delirium.
Happens with high fever.
Just last week I had a
patient who wouldn't stop
singing Rap. Thought he
was a pop music star."

"But, doctor..." began Ma.

He cut her short, saying, "He'll babble like this. Don't take it seriously. Give him plenty of fluids and this medicine."

"For God's sake, Ma, tell him," pleaded Patrick.

"It's true," said Ma quickly. "He is Santa." Dr. Alphonso stopped writing the prescription and studied our faces, one by one.

Ma explained,
"Mr. Kurien, Patrick's
boss, gives a Christmas
party for children every
year. Patrick has promised
to be Santa and he has to
be at Mr Kurien's house at
5 p.m."

"Where will they find a replacement at such short notice?" muttered Patrick looking quite distraught.

"Ah... you have a problem," said Dr. Ilphonso, making it sound like a brilliant diagnosis. "And I have a solution," he went on.

"What?" we chorused. "Where?"

"Right here. Before your eyes," he said simply.

We stared at him.
Dr. Alphonso was barely five feet tall. Bespectacled.
Bald, except for a few straggly hair. He reminded me of a moulting parrot. I could not imagine anyone more unlike Santa.

"Yes, sir! The answer to your problem is right here. Under your noses," he repeated.

"You mean... you?" I asked.

"Well... I was thinking of you," he said. Turning to Ma for a second opinion, he asked, "Don't you agree, Mrs. Devaraj? Young John will make an excellent Santa."

The man was clearly off his head. How could anyone in their senses come up with such a monstrous scheme?

"No!" I cried. "What an idea!"

"Great, isn't it?" beamed Dr. Alphonso.

To my horror, my mother and my brother seemed to agree with him. Relief was written all over their faces.

"But I am too young," I protested. "Only thirteen." "Your're tall for your age," countered the doctor.

"Don't you think he's rather skinny?" asked Ma. I threw her a grateful look.

"That's easily taken care of," replied the doctor who seemed to have a ready answer for every problem. "A pillow will do the trick."

"But, I can't..." I pleaded. "My voice... How will I sing carols?"

It was awfully embarrassing. My voice was breaking. I had no control over it. It seemed to have developed a will of its own. Now gruff. Now squeaky.

For a moment
Dr. Alphonso grappled
with the problem of a
squeaky-voiced Santa
leading the carol singers.
However, it did not faze
him. Despite myself I was
beginning to develop a
grudging admiration for
this man's ingenuity.

"No problem," he said.

"Just lip sync. You
know...Mouth the words.
No one will be any the
wiser. Cheer up," he added
picking up his bag. "We
can't have a glum Santa. I
am sure you are going to
enjoy yourself."

At four o'clock Ma put away her needlework kit and sighed, "I've done my best." "It's not bad," said Patrick. "I think he'll pass."

Ma turned me around to face the full length mirror. If it had been anyone else, I would have laughed. There was a huge pillow stuffed with goose feathers strapped to my tummy. Lengths of cotton wool had been stuck to my chin and jaws for a beard. A kingsize moustache tickled my nose and threatened to fall into my mouth every time I opened it.

Ma held out an enormous pair of white, satin trousers. They had, originally, been picked up for Patrick. He is twenty-three years old. Six feet three inches. With a chest span of forty-four inches. He makes a splendid, strapping Santa. I looked like a drastically shrunken version.

The telephone rang. Ma answered it. "Oh no!" I heard her say in dismay. And a few moments later, "All right, I'll tell him."

"John, that was Mr. Kurien on the line," she said.

"The party's been cancelled?" I asked hopefully.

She shook her head. "A minor change in plans," she said in a suspiciously casual voice. "They were sending a car to pick you up but it has a snag, and..."

I had a horrible feeling that she was leading up to some disastrous news.

"You mean...I have to walk," I burst out. "You expect me to walk! In broad daylight. In full view of the world. Dressed up like this!"

"The car is being repaired at this very moment. It'll pick you up on the way," she said, jamming the oversized red tasselled cap on my head. It covered my entire face.

"Mugrrumph...mmumh...
grumpgh.."

"Stop growling," said Ma adjusting the cap.

"I am not growling. The cap's a blooming menace. How can I see where I am going? And can't you do something about this silly tassel? How will I live this down?"

"You'll survive," she said heartlessly. "Now get a move on."

• Patrick grinned. "Stay cool," was his advice. "You'll do fine."

I set off on the most amazing walk of my life. 'Play it cool,' I told myself. 'Like you were born to it.' I walked down the road royally, ignoring the amused looks. A string of urchine attached them-



selves to me, gesticulating, yelling, laughing, dancing around my ankles.

"Lost your way, Santa?" asked a grinning autorickshaw driver.

"Hey, Santa, are you trying to lose weight?" someone else wanted to know.

The traffic cop blew his whistle. Cars and scooters came to a standstill. He waved me on, grinning and saluting smartly as I walked past. Despite my embarrassment I was beginning to enjoy the attention.

A black car, gleaming in the sunlight, stopped next to me. The rear door opened. A voice said, "Get in."

In my hurry to comply, I tripped over the hem of my red robe and catapulted in a tangle of arms and legs into the lap of a passenger seated in the back. The car shot forward. I sat up straight.

"Thank goodness, you made it," I said turning to my fellow passenger.
When I saw who it was I nearly fell off again.
"Santa!" I gasped. "You mean, you are Santa too?"

The face behind the white cotton beard nodded slowly. The eyes bored into me.

"Are you Patrick's replacement?" I asked in confusion. "But, how did you know..."

"Shut your mouth," snarled Father Christmas.

Clearly lacking in the spirit of brotherhood and goodwill. I wondered how he would handle seventy-five yelling, exuberant kids between the ages of three and ten years.

The car was speeding down the main road. It was headed in the wrong direction.

"Hey!" I cried. "Stop. You missed a turn."

The driver, a man I'd never seen before, pressed hard on the accelerator. I felt the first twinge of alarm. Something was seriously wrong.

"Are you kidnapping me?" I asked in a voice that, I am ashamed to say, shook like a leaf in a strong gale. "I am not the person you want...This is a mistake."

"Quiet!" growled Santa, glaring at me. There was something vaguely familiar about him.

Suddenly he jerked my neck back in a strong, inescapable grip and thrust a damp, horriblesmelling cloth into my face.

I was back in my worst nightmare. Inside a long, dark tunnel with no end in sight. A red-eyed, fire-breathing monster was after me. The ground trembled as it got closer. There was a rushing roar, an ear-splitting whistle. The monster was on top of me. I struggled with every last bit of my strength. Suddenly the noise faded away. It was calm and quiet once more.

Slowly, very slowly, sensation returned. I wiggled my toes and fingers. Finally I opened my eyes. Above me the sky had turned a deep blue, lit up in the west by the setting sun. I was lying on the ground beside a railway track. For miles around, the view was one of green paddy fields. Not one solitary human was in sight. My hands and feet were bound very tight. My mouth was gagged. When it came to moving about, I was more helpless than a baby. For a while I struggled weakly. It was no good.

Then, incredibly, I heard voices, carried across by the breeze. By some wonderful, unbelievable miracle, rescue was at hand. A dog barked very close. The barking became louder. It held an excited note. He had discovered something—



way," said Anu.

It set me thinking.
Someone had reasoned that one Santa looked exactly like another. In that garb, no one would know the difference.
Someone had wanted to take my place at the party. Why? There was only one way to find out.

"I must get back to the city at once," I said, scrambling to my feet.

"You want to go to the police station?" asked Anu.

"There's no time for that. I have to go to Mr. Kurien's house. It may be too late, already," I said.

"The next bus to the city will cross the highway only at 7 p.m." said Ram.

"Wait a minute!" shouted Anu excitedly. "I have an idea. The Renigunta Passenger."

Seeing my blank look
Ram explained that the
Renigunta Passenger was
a train due to pass that
way in a few moments. "It
stops and waits right here
for the signal to change.
Ample time to board it.
We'll be at Cantonment
railway station in eight
minutes." As if on cue, we
heard the chugging of an
engine. The Renigunta
Passenger came into view.

I leapt into a half-empty compartment. I turned

round to thank the pair.

"Later," said Ram hopping in after me. He helped his sister up. They grinned at me.

"We are coming along," said Anu gaily. "Who'd want to miss the end?"

"Don't worry about us.
Our parents are in Mysore
and there is only old
Akkamma to take care of
us. We'll handle her," said
Ram confidently.

When the train was about to reach Bangalore Cantonment, Ram said, "Hurry...This is where we get off."

The train slowed to a crawling pace, and we jumped out.

A few moments later we were on the road, hailing a passing autorickshaw.

Judging from the noise at Mr. Kurien's house, it was clear that the party was in full swing. We stood at the doorstep and pressed the bell long and hard. No one answered. The door was open so we walked in. Standing in the large, high-ceilinged hall, I suddenly developed cold feet.

"Who are you?" asked a stern voice from somewhere above.

A tall, well-built man with greying hair and a neat moustache, looked down through the banisters of the staircase that led to the first floor. Mr. Kurien. Coming down the stairs, he asked, "Yes? What do you want?"

"I am your Santa," I said simply.

He shook his head. "Our Santa has arrived. You've come to the wrong address."

Ram, Anu and I launched into a long, garbled explanation.
Mr. Kurien listened to us with growing impatience.
Fortunately, his wife appeared and wanted to know what was going on.

"There must be some mistake," she said after hearing us out. "Our Santa arrived twenty minutes ago. I made him sit in the guest room and sent in some coffee and snacks.

There was a long passage leading out of the hall. She walked to the end of it and opened a door. "He's gone," she cried, alarmed.

The empty tea tray stood on a table.

"Did you lock the bedroom door?" asked Mr. Kurien suddenly.

His wife nodded weakly. "Oh God! The diamonds...They are upstairs," she screamed.

Without wasting a moment Mr. Kurien

turned round and fairly sprinted up the staircase. The three of us followed.

"Watch out. He may be armed," cried Mrs. Kurien. "Oh, please be careful!"

The thief had lost several minutes in opening the locked door and a few more in breaking the combination lock on the safe behind the dressing table. Those precious minutes proved to be his undoing. Still it was a close shave. He had one leg across the window-sill when Mr. Kurien attempted a desperate dive and managed to grab the other one. The two men tumbled onto the carpet. Ram, Anu and I pounced on the thief with gusto, seizing an arm here, a leg there. In the struggle, his beard came off.

"Ratnam!" gasped Mrs. Kurien, recognizing the thief.

Now I knew why he looked vaguely familiar. Before he was sacked for gambling a few months ago, he had been Mr. Kurien's chauffeur. He used to drop Patrick home sometimes.

He confessed without much persuasion. Ratnam was aware that Mrs. Kurieh took the jewellery out of the bank



locker for Christmas and New Year. The children's party provided a perfect opportunity. He enlisted the help of his cousin, a mechanic in the garage where Mr. Kurien had sent his car for a routine servicing. It was a simple matter to delay the return of the car, and make that fake phone call. The duo waited till I crossed the crowded streets, and then picked me up in a quiet bylane.

The jewellery was recovered from the red sack. Ratnam's hands and feet were tied and he was locked in a room to await the arrival of the police.

"Oh, dear... Now that leaves us without a Santa to give away the presents," said Mrs. Kurien worriedly. "The children are restless. They want their gifts."

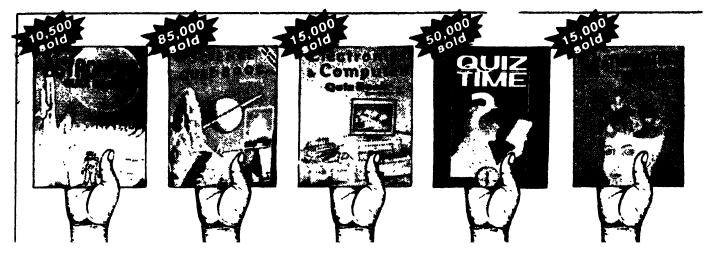
Four pairs of eyes turned to me. "Would you please..." requested Mrs. Kurien.

I could hardly refuse. Not after the lavish praise that Mr. Kurien had bestowed on me.

Aware that Anu and Ram were grinning away, I hoisted my bag of gifts and strode into the dining room, packed with children of all shapes and sizes.

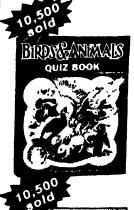
"Ho-ho-ho!" I hollered cheerfully.

"Merry Christmas, Santa," they roared back.



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Dear bothers and brothers,

There is somebody somewhere who looks after older brothers. I am sure of that now. I wasn't so sure earlier but now I am. Just listen to what happened.

You remember how my mother thought that I had covered my pillowcase with ink blobs when actually it was my brother, who had told me, not my mother, that he was an artist when I screamed at him and my mother had thought... Oh no! My clauses have all got mixed up. This is what happens when I am under

great emotional pressure, my clauses work all wrong. Anyway, what happened was, and you ought to have remembered this without my telling you, what happened was my pillowcase was ruined because my brother covered it with ink, blobs and my mother thought it was me. No, she did not think, I was the pillowcase. She thought it was I who had ruined my pillowcase with ink blobs.

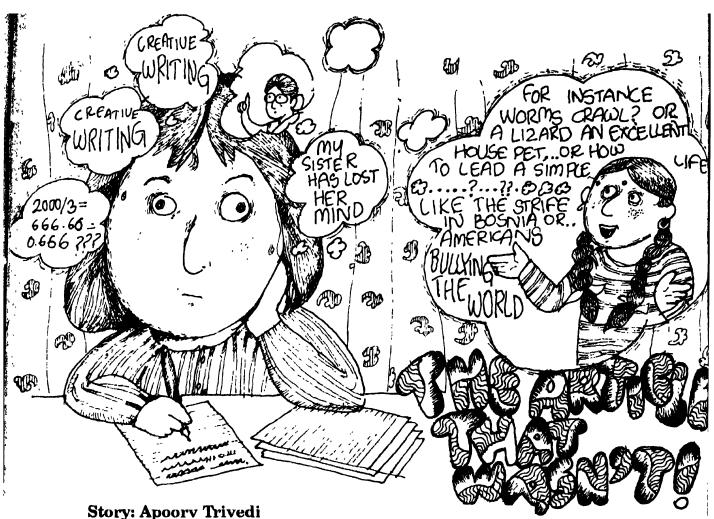
Phew! I hope that's clear now. Double phew!

Anyway, there I was, under great emotional pressure and my clauses getting all mixed up when something happened that cleared my name and the sunshine lit me up again. As I said, someone somewhere looks after older brothers. Otherwise do you think there would be any older brothers left in the world?

What happened was this. I was in my room, still under great emotional pressure but doing my homework nevertheless. when my mother barged into the room. "Perky," she velled even before making sure whether I was in the room or not, "Perky, now you've got ink on your towel. What are you doing, may I know? Why are you playing around with ink at this age? Don't you know...?"

I was just about to open my mouth to tell her that it wasn't me, sorry, it wasn't I, when, when she screamed...! Screamed! Screamed so loudly that my essay, unfinished, flew off my desk and landed in the wastepaper basket. Screamed so loudly that the clothes in my cupboard jumped and landed on the bottom shelf. Screamed so loudly that...





Illustrations: Deepak Harichandan

HE day before yesterday, Mrs. Chaturvedi, my English teacher, called me aside and asked me to contribute something to the monthly newsletter, "Creative writing," she said. She told me I could do it. I had it in me. She says this to me regularly. Me! Creative! North Pole! South Pole!

I can understand that she has to ask for articles. One fine day, the English teachers of our school had a brainwave, and started a newsletter. Choithram News, they call it. Now

they need articles to print in it. Naturally. Anybody can understand that. So can I. But what baffles me is that she asks me! Me!! I am told there are two thousand students in Choithram School, Two thousand, mind you!! No less! Two thousand is a big number. And two thousand students mean two thousand articles. Supposing three articles are published in the newsletter every month, she has an ample quota of articles for, let us see, umm...2000/3=666.666 months, give or take 0.666

months. So why does she ask me? I mean, this planning for the 667.666th issue of the newsletter in the name of future planning is a bit too much. It is the limit, really!!

Anyway! So, now I have an article on my hands, to top the co-ordinate geometry, chemical bonding and motion in three dimensions. Therefore, I sit down on my chair and do a bit of thinking. But my 'creative' mind is unable to generate any, even remotely creative ideas. Now I have only

one choice. Ask my sister. In her time, she too had been motivated by Mrs. Chaturvedi.

I ask her. She tells me there are lots of things to write about. For instance? I ask. For instance, she says, I could write a very good article on 'Why do worms crawl?' or 'Lizard—An excellent house-pet' or 'How to lead a simple life using banana leaves'.

With the level of IQ that she has what else can one expect. I wondered

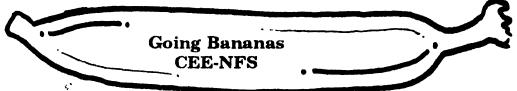
why I bothered. But everyone has to be given the benefit of doubt. That includes her!

I tell her I seriously want to write something! Why not? she says. There are lots of serious things just waiting to be written about. Like the strife in Bosnia or the Americans bullying the world or the tension between India and Pakistan or...My God! Her attitude!!

I don't want the topics to be serious. I want her to

be serious. I tell her so.
But she doesn't get my
point. She tells me I don't
get her point. I am a
dunce, she says. Why,
even an ignoramus would
understand what she was
saying. I tell her she has
lost her mind. And we part
ways on that sombre note.

Tomorrow I'll tell
Mrs. Chaturvedi I couldn't
write an article because
my sister had lost her
mind. (If she had one, that
is to say). I'm sure she will
understand.



Look at the banana. Neatly sealed in an attractive peel which keeps the flavour in, the germs out, and when discarded, degrades to enrich the soil. Probably the most environment-friendly packaging ever designed.

Now contrast it with the bottles, boxes and fancy foil packaging that entice the customer. Wasteful of resources, sometimes impractical, and usually non-biodegradable—this is the other side of the packaging revolution.

As consumers it is time we thought about this aspect, and exercised our discretion in making purchase decisions.



Avoid overpackaged goods. A plastic bottle in a cardboard carton wrapped in cellophone is certainly not "environment friendly". Bring indirect pressure on the manufacturers by rejecting such products.



Buy large economy packs and refills to save on both price and packaging material.



Don't encourage unnecessary use of plastic bags. Carry the good old cloth shopping bag.

Take a fresh look at nature's own packaging. It is environment friendly, naturally!

Text : Keya Acharya CEE-NFS

Illustrations: Nilabho FE GREW up, as he put it, "in the _jungles of the Western ghats" with "animals, birds and butterflies for company". His schooling upto the 10th standard was conducted at home, in the hands of a 'learned pundit'. And his childhood love for natural flora and fauna developed into an abiding interest that made him into a butterfly biologist with two doctoral degrees (from Copenhagen) on the subject. To his credit, Dr. Harish Goenkar, visiting scientist at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, has an interest in his subject that is almost palpable.

At the annual Science Congress, organised by the Bangalore Science Forum. Dr. Goenkar's talk on butterslies had an interesting slant. His studies on these beautiful and fragile insects from all over the Indian subcontinent have shown that butterflies are dependent on medicinal plants and vice versa. Both synthesize chemical that are necessary for each other. More than 25,000 species of butter flies, of which 1600 a endemic, feed on 4000

A FRAGILE MOMENT

TIME

species of plants of which 3500 are listed in the Indian list of medicinal plants documented by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The most graphic example is the milkweed family of caterpillars and butterflies that feed on the Sarpagandha (Rauwolfia serpentina). This plant, once widespread in north-east India and the western ghats, has been used for 2000 years in Ayurveda to combat hypertension. A higher dosage is administered as a sedative, while it is also used in varying strengths to doctor neurological and stress problems, which are now common in India's growing, urbanized society. Once it was recognised as a good source of the allopathic drug, Serpalin (used to bring down high blood pressure), the plant was in such great demand that its continuing existence is highly threatened. This state of affairs now threatens the survival of the milkweed family of butterflies.

Dr. Goenkar has noted an interesting adaptation technique that is now being used by these butterflies. In a bid to survive (and it remains a weak bid in the face of massive forestation in our need

for agricultural and housing lands), these butterflies have turned to plants close in genera to the Sarpagandha over the past 40 years or so, while Man continues to collect without scientific evaluation, all the plants in the rauwolfia genus. Thus, once Rauwolfia serpentina proved difficult to collect, Rauwolfia canescens, a common weed on the roadsides of Madras till the '50's, became the next target. And the milkweed butterfly keeps flitting desperately on to the next closest relative in its struggle for survival. Research shows that the related species interact with the butterfly, creating chemicals closest to the Sarpagandha. This entire relationship between the butterfly and medicinal plant is an area that remains unexplored. There is comfort though in knowing that both plant and butterfly still exist in the wild, says Dr.

Goenkar. However if environmental degradation continues at the same rate both species will remain very vulnerable. Another factor in the inter-relation between butterfly and medicinal plant (which, incidentally, is medicinal only in the human world and not in ecological terms) is the production of toxins in caterpillars which are poisonous to vertebrates but remain key protection for plants. Again, studies in this field are insufficient.

Environmental threats to both butterfly and plant come in various guises. One of them is socioeconomic. The Clerodendrum species of plants were once widespread in the western ghats. However, with wealth and economic prosperity, the need to possess gardens with exotic, imported species of plants has led to the Clearing and destruction of the once prolific Clerodendrum. This has now imperiled the many native butterfly species that feed off this plant. Farming practices, the indiscriminate use of chemical compounds, the draining of swamps and the cutting of trees are

nute met neve a profound effect on the environment and hence on these insects. Many species are incapable of responding to deteriorating conditions by dispersing to other areas. The speed and extent of such changes do not enable them to evolve adaptations for survival and therefore they become extinct. And when they do, they trigger off a chain reaction from others dependent on them for survival. If we think of any form of natural ecosystem (such as a forest), we see that every organism that inhabits it is actually an integral part of complex food chains in which there is the producer (the plant) transforming inorganic substances from air, water and soil into organic substances for insects (in this case the caterpillar) which feed on the producer and in turn are decomposed by bacteria when it dies into easily assimilable compounds by

soil and plant. So one cannot do without the other.

The unique biogeography of the Indian subcontinent is responsible for the evolution of many fascinating species of butterflies which inhabit the atmosphere from sea level right upto 6400 metres. The Indo-Paleartic region or the Himalayas has butterfly species similar to its European counterparts. While those of the central

Indian region have similarities with African butterflies, those of peninsular India share common features with their Malaysian cousins. The Idukki valley of the western ghats has butterflies that have remained unchanged for 50 million years.

Dr. Goenkar fears
further degradation of
forest areas of South
Kanara in Karnataka.
Growing medicinal plants
in closed cultivation does
not help ecologically, since

the chemical interaction between butterfly and plant will not be possible in such conditions, which in turn changes the chemistry of the ecosystem. Were the related • insectivora and soil conditions also to be cultivated, a nearer likeness to natural conditions could prevail. Man has a moral obligation to allow all species of our ecosystem to remain, regardless of whether they are beneficial to him or not.

MY HOLIDAYS

Merin Elizabeth Kuruvilla (11)

The amazing possibilities a holiday can hold

A safari adventure and digging for gold Scaling Mt. Everest, too good to be true The second Sherlock Holmes investigating

Escaping from the hands of a Red Indian

Rescuing a hostage from a deep, dark cave Taking in a homeless, starving stray Just a few things to do during a holiday No school, no homework, no ma'ams to

;ٍ preach Simply fooling around at arcades or the

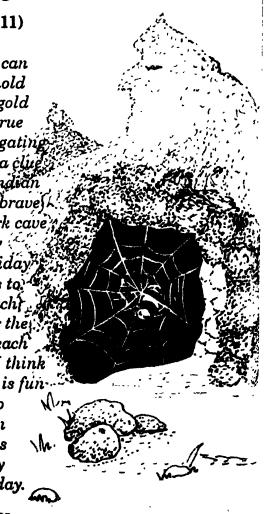
Do anything and everything which I think

From playing noughts and crosses to travelling to the sun The possibilities are endless, needless to say

But I just slept the whole of my holiday.

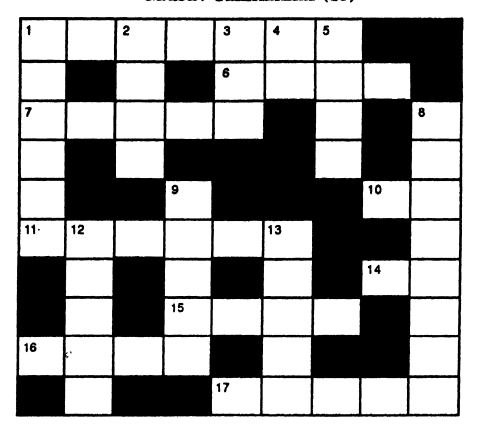
CHILDREN'S WORLD

DECEMBER 1995



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Gauray Tamhankar (13)



CLUES

A	_		_	_	_
A	C)	гч	п	e	s

- 1. Windy city (7)
- 6. Fairly cold (4)
- 7. Brother's or sister's

daughter (5)

10. Short form of Los

Angeles (2)

11. A country situated

in northern Europe (6)

14. Greek letter used to denote the ratio of the

circle's circumference to its

- diameter (2)
 - 15. Capital of Italy (4)
 - 16. Throw with

violence (4)

17. Country with

highest rainfall every

year (5)

Down

1. An important

city and port in South

China (6)

2. A mountain goat (4)

3. An unreturnable

serve in tennis (3)

- 4. Move, proceed (2)
- 5. Something that

flows sluggishly (4)

- 8. Capital of Brazil (8)
- 9. Revolve rapidly,

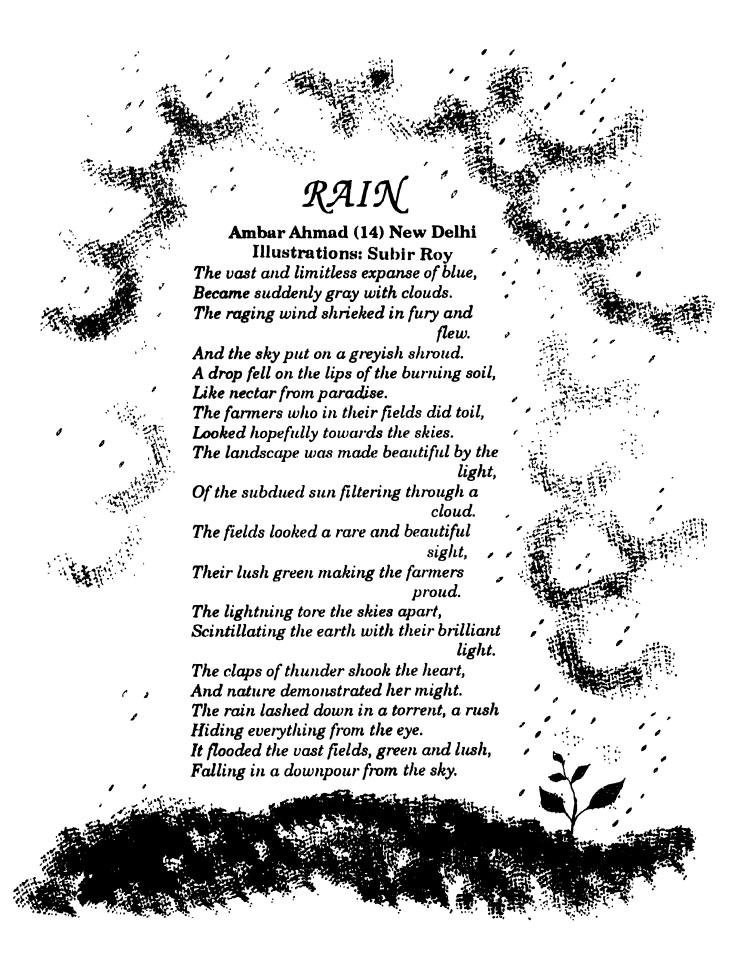
spin (5)

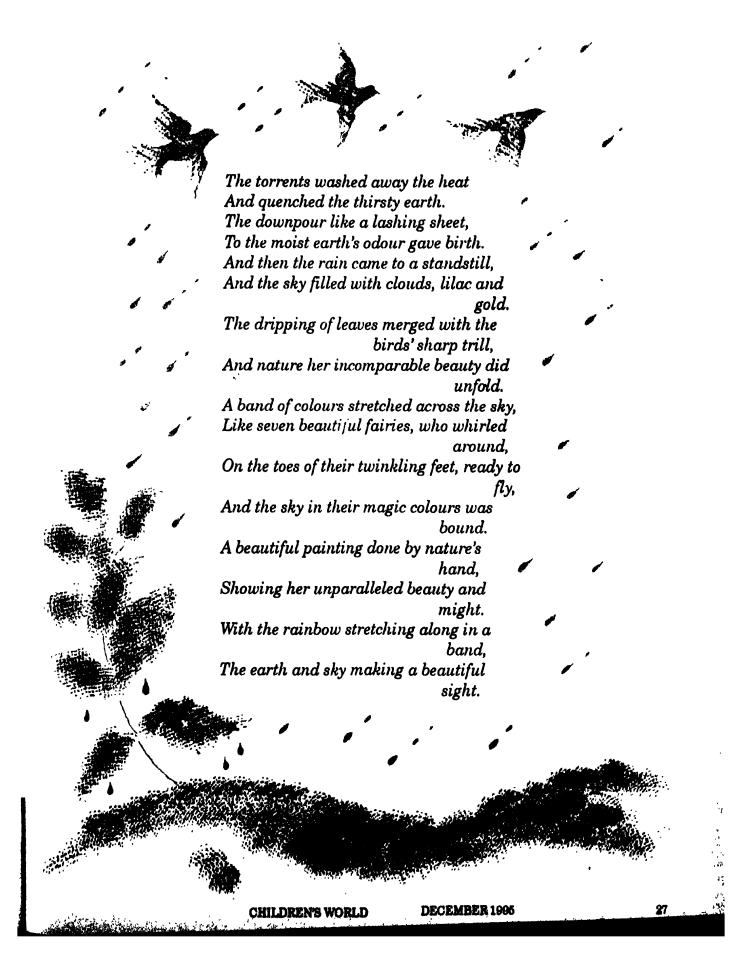
12. Drug made from

poppy seeds (5)

13. A country in Asia off

Arabia (5)







Story: Padmaja Menon Illustrations:

Deepak Harichandan RS. CHANDRA was agitated. 🧗 🎎 Rashmi's friend, Neha, had come from Bombay to stay with them. She was a very pretty girl and had been Rashmi's class-mate before Neha's father was transferred to Bombay. Now, two years later, she had decided to pay Rashmi a visit. Having been a regular visitor to their house in Bangalore before, the Chandra family was very fond of the child. Neha adored Rashmi and had made this trip only to be with her. She had a few relatives around Bangalore. As soon as she had checked into a hotel with her father, she had called up Rashmi. Her father would leave on a business trip to Cochin that night, then she would come over to Rashmi's. The relatives could wait! Then later she would shuttle to and frobetween all of them.

It was fine with Mrs. Chandra. Her children's friends were always welcome. That was not the problem. The problem was that Neha had grown up! The last two years had made her a tall, pretty teenager. Her auburn hair

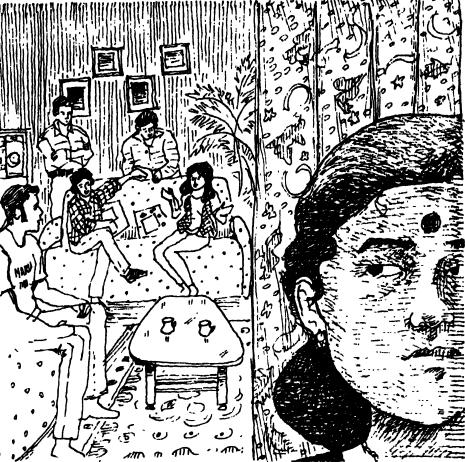
fell in curls around her fair, cherubic face. Her roly-poly figure had settled into svelte lines and she had acquired a ladylike grace too.

Rashmi was the same age but still looked and behaved like a child. And it was not limited only to looks. Rashmi was a child!

Neha was different. She was on the brink of adolescence and beginning to discover the magic of boys! She whispered about Bunny, Sunny and Robin. She whistled when boys passed by, she 'helloed'. guys freely, she talked to a few of her boyfriends back home on the phone; with the result that Rashmi, started feeling that she, Rashmi was a total boor! No boy looked at her or called her up. Why? Another irritating thing was Neha always wanted to go out for walks! Walks meant ogling surreptitiously at good looking hunks! And coming home and discussing their minus and plus points.

Frequent comments like "In Bombay, the guys are so macho! Here all the guys are yo poya!" resulted in Rashmi looking bewildered!

Mrs. Chandra suspected that maybe Rashmi was enjoying all this too. Quite



natural. Stepping into adult shoes would be enjoyable! It was okay. Youngsters would always be youngsters the world over but there was a time for everything. Rashmi was being pushed into growing up too soon!

A worried Mrs.
Chandra blew her top
mentally one day when
some boys came up to the
door and asked to see
Neha! And to top it all,
frequent phone calls too
started coming! How did
they get the number? On
being questioned, it
seemed that while out for
walks, the girls had struck
up a conversation with

some boys and one thing led to another and so on and so forth...

Mrs. Chandra was frantic. Should she call up Neha's mother and ask her to call her child back? Or should she just directly order Neha to pack up and go to her relatives? She was a bad influence! These girls who matured overnight, they cared little about studies and had their heads full of dressing up, make-up, boys!' thought Mrs. Chandra unfairly. Rashmi was getting spoilt and Mrs. Chandra did not like it one bit! But to Neha's credit, she was not secre-

tive about anything. It was all open and in good fun. Maybe, she, Mrs. Chandra, was being over protective. Mingling with boys was a healthy part of growing up. Teenagers should indulge in healthy friendship with both sexes. Too many restrictions would only make them repressed adults. Maybe all that Neha needed was proper guidance and care. If she scolded her for being boycrazy or called her a flirt, it might produce dire results. Just some advice and some warning about the facts of life would do. If she was packed off unceremoniously, a lifetime of friendship could be affected. Neha, who was just a normal, healthy teenager would also be hurt. And Rashmi, though still innocent about many things, could learn a lot of things from Neha. Learning from friends was more fun than anything else.

'I think I should leave well enough alone. Unnecessary parental interference solves nothing!' thought Mrs. Chandra. She would just keep an eagle eye on them. That was all. After all, the holidays would soon be over and Neha would be gone.

Yes, that would be the best way of tackling the situation. Adolescent children were like crystal glasses. A small slip would shatter them to smithereens! They needed understanding and care at times like this. And all mothers should know that. They had also passed through that stage. Mrs. Chandra felt better when she made her

decision. She would have to do some screening, some censoring and some guiding. And of course lots of caring, she nodded to herself. Suddenly the phone rang.

"Yes?" asked Mrs. Chandra.

"Is Rashmi there?" asked a male voice.

Drawing a deep breath, Mrs. Chandra replied, "Yes, of course, who is it..."





Appropriately, the United Nations celebrated its 50th anniversary in India, by making children the focus of attention. On October 10, it launched its Passport to the Future programme, Asia-wide, by symbolically presenting a few of these passports to Delhi school-children. Eventually 1,00,000 such passports are to be issued to Indian children, as they have been to children in U.S.A. and U.K. so far. Other countries of the world too, are shortly to be included in this programme.

The project aims 'to engage children from all over the world in demon-

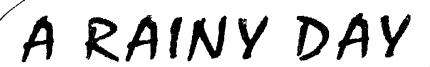
strating their commitment to global citizenship and their visions for a better future by helping to protect the environment, defending the human rights of children and young people and encouraging peaceful ways of resolving conflict in the world'.

Reebok sponsored the ceremony at India International Centre on October 10 where Mrs. Sonia Gandhi gave away 15 such passports to a few chosen children from Delhi schools. They read out their pledges to protect the environment by "telling people not to smoke", by "recycling

waste-paper and bottles and so on", by "walking or riding a cycle to school" to reduce pollution and so on and so forth.

Earlier, children from the Sardar Patel Vidyalaya choir had set the mood by singing a few songs.

Those interested in pledging to support the UN in its efforts to have a peaceful, harmonious, and an environmentally healthy planet Earth, by becoming a passport holder to the future, could get in touch with the United Nations office in India at 73, Lodi Estate, New Delhi-110003.



Story: Amrita Sabat (10) 🦼

Illustrations: Seema Pandey

UR school had $_{f}$ just reopened when we had to face the city's heaviest a rainfall. It was the heaviest, I tell you. We reached the school drenched, only to find to our joy that the school had declared a holiday. We were pleased, for it meant that we could go and play and jump and dance at home and also a sail hundreds of paperboats! Yippee!

I was very excited when I reached home. I immediately changed into dry clothes. It was very nice to I made lots and went into hear the pitter-patter, jhip jhip jhip' sound on the window-pane. I sat by the window and, being

fascinated and happy, watched the heavy downpour make the roads look like rivers. The birds chirped loudly and the frogs croaked delightedly. I said, "Rain, rain, please don't go away."

But it pretended not to f hear me and soon stopped. It looked like it was saying, "I'll certainly " come, but another day. Wherever the clouds wish, 🔏 they'll take me. 'Bye!" 🗸

And then for my 6 favourite activity in the rain—sailing paper boats. the big street. I sailed one Sbut a big car came and splashed water on it. Oh no! That spoiled my poor

paper boat! No matter had dozens more! Some other children of our neighbourhood were also sailing paper boats. All children love doing so.

Just then, I looked up and to my pleasure—there was the most wonderful 🗸 rainbow I had ever seen. The flowers looked so fresh—as if they had had a bath. The plants looked green and beautiful. The 🔏 sky looked a dear blue. I 🦼 gazed open-mouthed at this was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen. I enjoyed that particular of day a lot—it was the best rainy day ever!







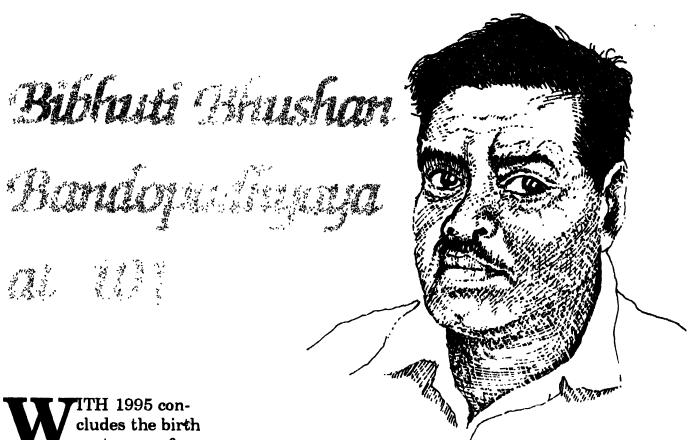












centenary of Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyaya, known the world over as the creator of Apu and Durga in Pather Panchali, later to be made into a film directed by Satyajit Ray. One of the best-loved of authors of West Bengal. Bibhuti Bhushan was born on September 12, 1894. His father. Mahananda Bandopadhyaya (Shastri), belonged to the village Chalki Barakpur of Banagram in what was then the district of Jessore. Mahananda was a Sanskrit scholar and the title 'Shastri' was acquired in Benares, where he had

spent part of his youth. A

Text: Dipavali Debroy

kathak (bard, one who narrates mythological tales) as well as the local priest, Mahananda could eke out only a poor existence for his family. His second wife and Bibhuti Bhushan's mother, Mrinalini Devi, had a tough time taking care of their little sons and daughters, of whom Bibhuti Bhushan was the eldest.

Mahananda's cousin, the widowed Menaka Devi, lived with the family, and was an additional burden on it. A sister of Bibhuti Bhushan's, Mani or Saraswati, died very early, and Mahananda himself

Portrait: Beejee

died when Bibhuti
Bhushan was still at the
Banagram High School.
Bibhuti Bhushan's childhood experience left a very
deep impression on him
and was reflected in
almost every piece that he
wrote.

Fatherless, Bibhuti
Bhushan had to struggle
in order to pass his Matriculation examination in
1914. He joined the I.A.
course at Ripon College
(now Surendranath College), Calcutta, staying at
the mess. This marked the
beginning of a friendship
with the famous writer
and critic, Nirad C.

Chaudhuri, now in his nineties. Passing his I.A. examination in 1916, Bibhuti Bhushan joined the B.A. course and shifted to the hostel, graduating in 1918. Meanwhile, in 1917, 21year-old Bibhuti Bhushan had got married to 14year-old Gouri of Panitar. But she died the very next year, leaving him desolate. He had joined M.A. and the law courses at the University of Calcutta, but 1919 found him teaching at Jangipara High School in the district of Hooghly, at a salary of **Rs.** 50 per month. In 1920 he joined Harinabhi School of Sonarpur.

Bibhuti Bhushan lost his mother at this juncture, just before his first short story *Upekshita* (The Neglected One) got published in the reputed magazine, Prabasi. He discontinued teaching and, in 1922, became the publicity agent of the Gorakshini Sabha (Cow Protection Society), patronised by Keshoram Poddar, a Marwari millionaire and travelled in that capacity all over what a now Bangladesh.

In 23, Bibhuti Bhushan became a private tutor at the establishment of

Khelatchandra Ghosh of Pathuriaghata and, in 1924, the manager of Khelatchandra's Jangalmahal estate at Bhagalpur in Bihar. His work took him all over the country, from Azamabad in the North and Kishenpur in the South to Phulkia-Labtulia Narah Baihar in the East and Monghyr in the West. It brought Bibhuti Likushan the unique experience of riding through forests on horseback, sometimes at night.

Also, it was at Bhagalpur that Bibhuti Bhushan met the editor of the magazine Bichitra, which, in 1928, began to serialise his novel Pather Panchali. His friend. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, found a publisher for it and, on October 2, 1929, the book saw the light of day. Bibhuti Bhushan had dedicated it to his father. Mahananda, whom he considered to be a major influence in his life.

In late 1929 Bibhuti
Bhushan took up the
profession of teaching once
again. For the next twelve
years of his life, he was a
teacher of Bengali at the
school, Khelatchandra
Calcutta Institution. He
worked briefly as the
editor of Chitralekha (first

published in November 1930), probably the first film magazine in Bengali.

In 1926 Bibhuti Bhushan had started on a sequel to Pather Panchali. Aparajito (The Undefeated), the sequel, was serialised in 1930-31, in Prabasi. The book, published in two volumes in 1933, was dedicated to Bibhuti Bhushan's mother. Mrinalini Devi. Meghamalhar (The Monsoon Song), his first collection of short stories, was also published in 1932.

By now Biblitti Bhushan was an established writer. In 1933, Rabindranath Tagore himself praised Pather Panchali in Parichay, a pioneering journal of literary criticism. Bibhuti Bhushan began to be felicitated by his fans, and invited to seminars and literary gatherings. Aranyak (About the Forest), rated only second to Pather Pan hali, Drishtipradip (The Lamp of Vision) and several other works were the product of the '30s. He also travelled widely over India during this period. Singbhum, Patna, Rajgir in Bihar, Puri in Orissa, Nagpur in Maharashtra...Bibhuti

Bhushan loved his travels. At the same time he had to perform the routine work of teaching, correcting papers and so on. He set question papers and was an examiner for the Matriculation Examination as well.

In November 1939, Bibhuti Bhushan lost his widowed sister, Jahnabi, in a tragic manner. He took upon himself the responsibility of his orphaned nephew and niece. In the same month he came to meet Rama (Kalyani) Chattopadhyaya, a schoolgirl keen to have his autograph.

For 22 years after his wife Gouri's death,
Bibhuti Bhushan had remained a widower. In
March 1939, when
Aranyak was published as a book, he dedicated it to her. His house at
Ghatshila in Bihar was named Gourikunja after her.

Now, in December 1939, he married for the second time, making Kalyani, 29 years younger, his wife.

With the onset of the second World War, and the scare that the Japanese would bomb Calcutta, the Khelatchandra Calcutta Institution was practically closed down, and Bibhuti Bhushan left it in January

1942. In April, he took up teaching at Haripada Institution at Gopalnagar.

The next eight years of Bibhuti Bhushan's life were fruitful as well as happy. He wrote books like Abhiyatrik (The Venturer), Ashani-sanket (The Lightning's Signal), Duibari (Two Houses). Bane Pahare (Hills and Forests), Trinankur (Blades of Grass), Heeramanik Jwale (Diamonds and Rubies Shine). Ichhamati (The River Ichhamati), and Debian (The Vehicle of the Gods). He travelled, sometimes with Kalyani and sometimes without. Though he had more or less shifted to Ghatsila (in district Singhbhum, Bihar), he kept his links with Calcutta, especially College Street where most booksellers and publishers were concentrated. He was a most affectionate husband and a very fond father at 53, when son, Taradas (Bablu), was born.

For some time, Bibhuti Bhushan had been planning a sequel to Pather Panchali and Aparajito, which would describe the childhood of Apu's son, Kajal. But death defeated his efforts. Following a sudden heart attack on October 28, 1950, Bibhuti

Bhushan died on November 1.

Though Bibhuti Bhushan is read mostly in Bengali, quite a few of his novels have been translated. Pather Panchali, for example, has been translated into English (Song of the Road by T.W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji. Rupa & Co.) and French (La complainte du sentier, by F. Bhattacharya, Gallimard). Aranyak has been translated into several Indian languages, including Malayalam and Hindi. The Sahitya Akademi has brought out a Hindi translation of his adventure story Chander Pahar (The Mountain of the Moon) to commemorate his birth centenary. His biographies are available in Hindi as well as Bengali.

As is well known, the Apu trilogy that catapulted Satyajit Ray to fame are based on Bibhuti Bhushan's novels. So is Ray's Ashani-sanket. Less known, perhaps, is the fact that the Hindi film Amar Prem a commercial hit, is also based on a short story by Bibhuti Bhushan (Nishi-padma or the Lotus of the Night).

Bibhuti Bhushan's works can broadly be classified into four categories.

Novels and short stories depicting real life form the major chunk of his works. In fact, Bibhuti Bhushan's speciality was that he could make the most mundane of everyday situations blossom into unforgettable works of literature. Apart from *Pather Panchali* and Aparajito, the novel Anuvartan (Succession) and the short story Puinmacha (The Trellis) are examples.

The second category consists of novels, as well as pieces in the style of letters and diaries, that describe forests and dwell on environmental issues. Aranyak is probably the first Indian novel dealing with the subject of the chopping of forests in order to make room for men, and depicting human greed and squalor in contrast to nature's beauty and bounty. Bane Pahare and Abhijatrik belong to this category. So do certain sections of Aparajito. Chander Pahar—though primarily an adventure story contains vivid descriptions of East Africa.

Next, we have tales about supernatural phenomena and bizarre happenings. In Drishtipradip, Jitu is a

boy with second sight. He has visions about the future which become less frequent as he grows up. Debjan is about rebirth and life after death. Rankini Devir Kharga (The Scimitar of Goddess Rankini) and Taranath Tantriker Galpa (The Story of Taranath the Tantrik) are examples of such strange stories.

Then there are straightforward tales of adventure
and treasure-hunt like
Chander Pahar, Heeramanik Jwale, Maraner
Danka Baje (The Deathdrum Beats), and
Mishmider Kabach (Talisman of the Mishmi Tribe).
Apart from the poetic
descriptions of distant
lands and historic ruins,
they contain a lot of action
and excitement.

Though Bibhuti Bhushan wrote for adults as well as children, it is to the children's world that he really belonged. This is not simply because he wrote some really gripping adventure stories for children, but because childhood was very important to him as a theme. He had, in fact, once noted in his diary: "...I was sitting and trying to think of a few major childhood incidents. I analysed them a little. It may be said

that 'what is there to think about and analyse in one's childhood? Everyone has a childhood. What is novel about it?' But, no. Such analysis is most essential" (Smritir Rekha, September 16, 1927).

In Pather Panchali and Drishtipradip, Bibhuti Bhushan has described the unfolding of the mind of two sensitive children, Apu and Jitu respectively. In Pather Panchali it was his own childhood that he had re-created, modelling Apu's father, mother, sister and aunt on his own. In Puinmeria, he depicted the village-girl, Khenti, with great sympathy. In Jadu Hajra he described a village lad's first exposure to the world of theatre. In Nishipadma too, the world is seen through the eyes of a child.

It was because Bibhuti Bhushan was so involved with the question of children's development that he began Kajal, the sequel to Aparajito.
Though Bibhuti Bhushan was unable to finish it himself, his son, Taradas, finished it for him.

At 101, Bibhuti
Bhushan thus stands
undefeated by death,
aparajito like his own
Apu.

More Than I Asked For

Divesh Aggarwal (13) New Delhi

Illustrations: Seema Pandey

You can laugh at me all you can, But I'll tell you how this began. I said to my father, "Dad, today I'm thirteen." You know what he asked, "What's that supposed to mean? I've given you a bicycle for the roads rough or tough, And don't you think, for a birthday present, this bike is quite enough." "No, Daddy, it's not that," I said, softening my tone. "It's just that I want a room that is entirely my own." From his looks I knew he would not agree, That was plain and obvious for everyone to see. He looked at me as if I had gone totally But he also seemed to notice that I was quite sad "I'll give you a room," said he, "as you've become a teen ager, But you'll have to share it with your younger brother." Now I'm more uncomfortable than ever, Because my brother is naughty and his ways clever. Whenever he wants some time free.

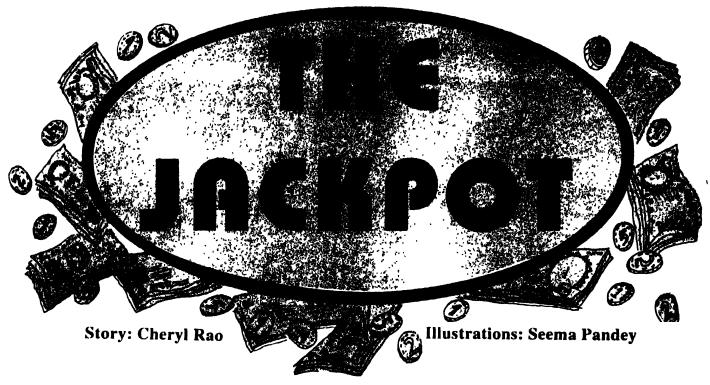
He gets his work done by me.

He keeps me busy and spinning like a

Well, you can still laugh at me all you can.

ceiling fan,





WELVE-YEAR-OLD Rohit raced down the alley and into his house. He threw his bag on the floor and yelled, "Mama, Mama!"

Mrs. Malik came out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on a napkin. "What is all the noise about, Rohit?"

"Oh, Ma, do you remember how angry you were with me when I bought that lottery ticket with the five rupees Uncle Prem gave me for my birthday?" Mrs. Malik didn't reply,

waited for Rohit to go abou. Ia, that ticket has nomer, ten lakhs!" happer, gasped Mrs. Malik Drishti, wingly as she

steered her son into the bedroom for him to remove his school uniform.

"It's true, Ma! Shekhar Bhaiya, the lottery agent, asked me to get my ticket. He said that the control number was his, and I have to check the number of my ticket. But I know it by heart. It is 7600872 and that's the number that has won the prize. Think of it, Ma! Just five rupees and we'll now get ten lakhs! We can do everything we never had money for before!"

Mrs. Malik was stunned into silence. So much money! No more pinching and scraping, no more digging into her reserves in the last week of the

month, to pay for milk and vegetables. No more wearing her pullover inside out all day in the kitchen, and then turning it the right way round to go out and do her shopping. No more cutting up her husband's old trousers to make clothes for Rohit, no more dupattas for thirteen-year-old Shweta from threadbare old sarees.

She sat down and sighed dreamily, seeing herself going on a shopping spree and then distributing all her old clothes to the neighbours. But, she realised with a jerk, the same people would not be her neighbours. Raghay, her

husband, would insist on buying that flat at Sudarshan Heights, near his office. With ten lakhs, he could do it immediately. without a second thought. And they'd leave this crowded neighbourhood and move into a sleek. new locality. Who would her new friends be? Would she be able to rush home to care for her old parents, knowing that there was always Mrs. Gupta or Mrs. Divan or Mrs. Joshi to watch over her house and her family? And when she was ill, who would send her three meals a day and sponge her forehead when she was too weak to move? Those new neighbours behind their fancy glass doors? She didn't think so.

"Come here, son," she called to Rohit. "Tell me, do you know what a difference ten lakhs would make in our lives?"

"Oh, yes, Ma, we can have a holiday in Goa. I can get a new pair of jeans—you know, those frayed ones which are the rage now. And you would never have to worry about buying new exercise books and pens and uniform shoes for me. And I could give Adarsh and Subhash and Bipin neat presents on their birthdays..."

Mrs. Malik hugged her son. "Those are small things, you know. The first thing we'd do is move out of this cramped little house into a posh neighbourhood. You'll go to a good school and..."

Rohit looked at her in dismay. "Whatever for? I like the school I go to now!"

"But son, just the other day you were complaining about Mrs. Behl. You said that she goes too fast with the lessons and you don't understand."

Rohit looked shamefaced. "She goes fast—but she does the difficult lessons again and again until all of us understand. I like her. Besides, what about my friends? I can't leave them!"

"I suppose you'll make new ones."

"I don't need new friends!" Rohit cried.

"There'll be a swimming pool in that colony," his mother said temptingly, changing the topic.

"So what? We go to the Municipal Swimming Pool in summer anyway. But if I leave this place, I won't be able to carry on the cricket practice with Adarsh and his father. You know what a great coach he is—and he told me that I have promise. Promise!

Can you see me as another Sachin?"

Mrs. Malik smiled and ruffled Rohit's curly hair. "Oh, I can. I can indeed."

"Then we will stay here," said Rohit firmly. "That's decided. After all, it's MY lottery ticket."

Shweta strolled in, put her hand to her head and did a graceful turn before them. "Have you heard the news, Mum?" she asked. "Now Preeti and I can go to Modelling School! Can you see me learning to glide down the ramp in all kinds of fancy clothes?"

"Yuck!" said Rohit. "If you dress like those people on TV, I'll say that I don't have a sister. But anyway, Preeti won't go into modelling. She's intent on becoming an engineer. She'll never stop her studies to follow YOU!" Then, just to needle Shweta, he added, "But we have ten lakhs, you need not have practical Preeti for a friend. You can have other more interesting and fun-loving ones in that posh colony we'll shift into!"

Shweta and Preeti were inseparable. "You can change all your friends if you like, you time-server!" Shweta replied. "I'm sticking to mine."



"I should think so, young lady," said Mrs. Malik. "You and Preeti are good for each other."

When Raghav Malik came in tired that evening, the children crowded around him with their news. "Oh, Papa, we can go for a holiday now!" "We can buy new clothes!" "Ten lakhs, Papa; think of it!"

"We're rich, Papa, we're rich!"

Mr. Malik put down his briefcase and raised his voice to be heard above the din. "Oh, just today I was reading about a camping trip in Mahableshwar which is easy on the pocket. I thought that we could go there in the Dussehra break-but if we have so much money, then of course we can go to Goa instead and stay in a hotel..."

"No way!" cried the children. "Camping out in the hills in Mahabaleshwar will be so much more fun! We've never done it before. It'll be an adventure!"

Mr. Malik looked at his wife. "My sister, Vinita, has got a job as a lecturer, and in return for all she says I've done for her and the rest of my family, she has sent us her first pay

cheque. Enough money to get new clothes for all of you. And, believe it or not, this month, I've paid the last instalment of my housing loan and this place is finally in my name!"

He turned to his children. "If, as you say, we're coming into ten lakhs, then I'll sell this house and buy a flat at Sudarshan Heights."

"No," exclaimed Mrs. Malik.

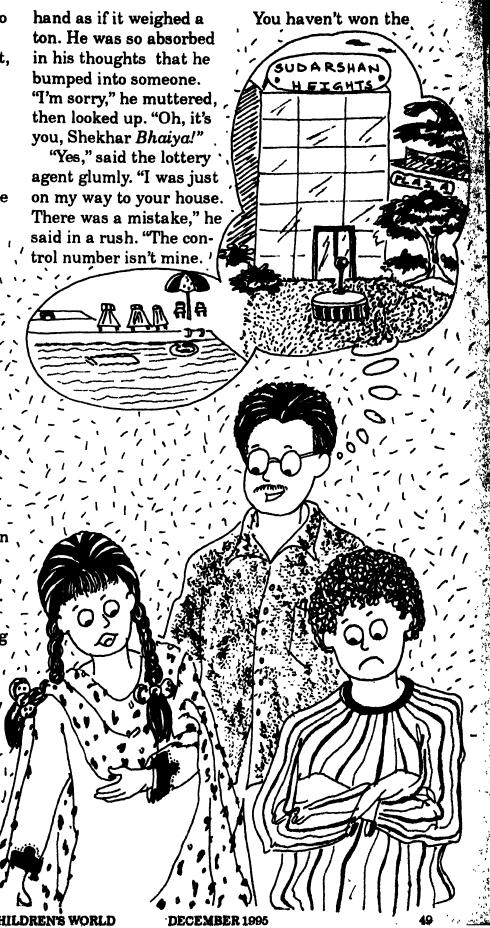
"We won't leave this house, Papa!" cried the children in unison.

"There's a swimming pool there, a park, a shopping centre—all the amenities—you'll love it!" said their father.

Rohit marched to his cupboard and pulled out the lottery ticket he'd been so anxious to claim a fortune from. "I think I'll, tear this up, Ma," he said. "We don't need the ten lakhs. We have everything we want. We don't need a new house and new friends and new anything!"

"Those are the nicest words a child could ever say," said Mrs. Malik 'proudly. "But, don't tear up the ticket son. Go ahead and take it to Shekhar Bhaiya."

Rohit went out slowly, carrying the ticket in his



lottery." He kept his eyes averted, not wanting to see the disappointment on the boy's face. But to his surprise, he heard a shout of happiness.

"Hip hip hooray!" cried Rohit. "That's the best piece of news you could have given me. Here, take this," he added, thrusting the ticket into Shekhar's hand and turning to run back.

He burst into the house, startling everyone. "We're safe! We're safe!" he panted as if they had had a narrow escape from danger. "That was all a mistake. We haven't won the lottery!"

A look of relief and happiness was exchanged between the others. Who needed that lottery of ten lakhs when they had such good fortune?

They had won a prize that was more precious than any lottery. They had won the jackpot of contentment!













Answers to Crossword Puzzle

(See page 25)

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PEN-FRIENDS CORNER

GIRLS

Those who wish to enrol themselves as members of the Children's World Penfriends Club may do so by sending us the accompanying form. Cut out the form, fill up the details neatly, and mail it to us. As the form helps in indexing and preservation of records, its use is a MUST. All those who send in their particulars in the form will get priority in enrolment. Limit your hobbies and choice of countries to have penfriends from to TWO. Whenever members write to their pen-friends it will be advisable to mention their membership-number.

7804
Sadiqua Ahmed (12)
c/o Mr. A.K. Hazarika
Bhogdoinunkh
Hazarika Building
A.T. Road, Jorhat 785001
Assam, India
Painting, travelling
France, U.K.
7805

Mehak Nakra (9) 21/34 Old Rajinder Nagar New Delhi 110060, India Reading, music Canada, U.K.

7806
Bishnumaya Tamang (16)
Sarpang Junior High School
Class VIII
P.O. Sarpang, Dist. Sapang

Bhutan Photography, writing Any country 7807 Heera Kala Gajmer (13) Trashigang Junior High School P.O. Trashigang Dist. Trashigang, Bhutan Dancing, music Any country 7808 Anu Tamang (14) Trashi Junior High School Trashigang, Bhutan Stamps, music

7809 Ashla Merlin (14) T/C 11/378, East Cliff Lane

Japan, Sikkim

CHILDREN'S WORLD PEN-FRIENDS CLUB ENROLMENT FORM

	11 An	
Member No (To be fille	d by office) Issue dated	,
Name: Mister / Miss	Age*	Years
	k letters)	
Address:	••••••••••••	
	••••	
Hobbies:	••••••••••••	***************
Pen-friends wanted in (Country)	************************************	••••••
*Age limit: 16 years		Signature

GIRLS

D.B. Junction Dancing, drawing Reading, playing Kowdiar P.O. Any country Any country Thiruvananthapuram 7815 7820 Kerala 695003, India Lata Agarwal (15) J. Sangeetha (12) Reading c/o Mr. Omprakash No. 23A, M.G. Road Any country II Avenue, Sastry Nagar Agarwal Shri Kanya Pathshala Lane 7810 Madras 600020 Tamil Nadu, India Tinsukia, Assam, India Apeksha Pathak (11) Painting, reading c/o Sri D.K. Pathak, I.P.S. Reading, making friends India Singapore, U.S.A. D.I.G. Eastern Range Jorhat, Assam, India 7821 7816 Drawing, stamps Nidhi Bhardwaj (11) Tasmeem Mala (14) U.S.A., Switzerland F-1 HMT Officer Colony c/o Manama Farms and **Pinjore 134101** 7811 Foods Haryana, India Sonam Palden (15) P.O. Box 41 Stamps, skating VII-C, Nanglam Junior Panchgani 412805 Japan, Australia Maharashtra, India High School P.O. Nanglam, Bhutan Dancing, music 7822 Pen-friends, music Any country Sapana Modak (15) Any country Type II, Sector V 7817 33/C, OF Chanda 7812 Megha Aggarwal (13) Dist. Chandrapur 442501 Drishya A. (12) C-176 Maharana Pratap Maharashtra, India 'Prasad' Enclave Music, reading Pitampura Area Parli Post, Palakkad Dist. France, Singapore Kerala 678612 Delhi 110034, India India Reading, dancing 7823 Philately, drawing Any country Rutu Mulkar (13) Any country 29, Deshbandhu Apt. 7818 Kalkaji 110019 7813 Kabita Chakraborty (14) New Delhi, India c/o Mr. A.K. Chakraborty Namita Kulkarni (10) Reading, making friends d/o Arvind Kulkarni Qr. No. D/103 Any country Chandrapura Flat No. 11 Dist. Bokaro 16 Queen's Garden 7824 Bihar 825303, India 'Teerath Kuni' Karma Choden (15) Pune 411011 Reading, painting Class II Maharashtra, India U.S.A., Japan Tshangpo Primary School Reading, painting Thrimsing Dungkhang 7819 Any country Bhutan Mamata Rasiwasia (15) Reading, singing c/o Sri Hukmichand 7814 Nepal, U.S.A. Rasiwasia V. Kanakaa (9) Shri Kanya Pathshala Lane 7825 1470, Lodhi Road Complex New Deihi 110003, India Abhilasha Srivastava (10) Tinsukia, Assam, India

GIRLS

Sector VIII, Qr. No. 92 Ramakrishnapuram New Delhi 110022. India Gardening, reading India, Japan 7826 Shweta Gupta (11) 4/6 Roop Nagar Delhi 110007, India Swimming, writing Any country 7827 Dimple H. Patel (14) Shantinath Nagar 54 At & P.O. Bardoli Dist. Surat Gujarat, India Reading, stamps U.S.A., U.K. 7828 Kanchan C. (11) Bldg. No. 7/B-5 Damodar Park LBS Marg, Ghatkopar Bombay 400086

Maharashtra, India Reading, stamps Any country

7829 C. Sreepradha (12) 6/53, Manju Apartments K.K. Nagar Street Madras 600078 Tamil Nadu, India Music, drawing Any country

7830 Anubhuti Joshi (14) 24-A/1 Hira Nagar Patiala 147001, Punjab Reading, basketball India

7831 Ashima Punj (12) H. No. 1859 A, Sector 29 Housing Board Colony Faridabad, Haryana India Dancing, singing

7832 Nupur Sood (12) BW-50A, Shalimar Apt. Shalimar Bagh Delhi 110052, India Dancing, music Any country

Australia, U.S.A.

7833 Chimi Dema (11) Drukgyel High School Paro, Bhutan Stamps, dancing Any country

7834 Chaitali Singh (15) Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar Block-A, Kalkaji Ext. Area New Delhi 110019, India Music, movies Any country

7835 Demili Mathew (10) c/o Mathew Jacob No. 37 K.K.P. Nagar U.C. College, P.O. Aluva Kerala 638102, India Stamps, painting U.S.A., Japan

7836 Sanchita Banerjee (15) d/o Mr. Sukumar Banerjee Carbonization Laboratory C.F.R.I. P.O. F.R.I. Dist. Dhanbad

Bihar 828108, India Collecting cards, learning languages Any country

7837 Nehal Jain (13) 418 College Road Civil Lines, Ludhiana Puniab. India Music Any country

7838 Udita Upadhyay (9) A-403 Harshvardhan Raheja Township Malad (East) Bombay 400097 Maharashtra, India Reading, painting India, Mauritius

Sajna Devan C. (13) d/o K. Sahadevan Near Parvathi Clinic Chemmad Tirungadi 676306 Kerala, India Music, drawing Any country

7839

7840 Swati Ramchandra Jadhav (14) d/o Ramchandra Jadhav Flat No. C/32 Ground Floor Kundan Gardens Behind St. Ursula High School Akurdi. Pune 411035 Maharashtra, India Painting, stamps Japan, U.S.A.

BOYS

7852 7841 7846 Ashish David (15) Abhishek Gupta (12) Bhavesh Joshi (15) 3375, Lane No. 2 4/6, Roop Nagar 9 Saideep Apartment Christian Colony Delhi 110007, India N/R Manit Cricket, tennis Karol Bagh SOC, Karelibaug New Delhi 110005 Baroda 390018 Any country Making friends Gujarat, India 7847 India Stamps & coins, music Gaurav Gupta (14) U.S.A., U.K. 7853 4/6 Roop Nagar **Anand** (15) 7842 Delhi 110007 **Hotel Samrat** Varun (14) India D-152 Ashok Vihar Kulri Bazaar Reading, stamps Mussoorie 248179 Any country Phase I Uttar Pradesh. India New Delhi 110052, India 7848 Music, making friends Lawn tennis, cricket Sunny Arora (13) Any country India, U.S.A. Street No. 8, H. No. 1996 7854 7843 Pahargani Nitin (15) S.M. Subhash (14) New Delhi 110055, India Flat No. 27, Pocket D-10 Stamps & currency s/o K.R. Mahabala Rao Sector-7, Rohini U.S.A. Sriganganilaya New Delhi 110085, India Siddaramatta 7849 Pen-friends, music Koppa Taluk Gajanan Kerkar (15) Oman, India Chickmagalur Dist. c/o Narayan Kerkar Karnataka, India 7855 878 Karabhat, Choroa Movies, writing Manish Bansal (15) Goa 403102, India Any country C-9/76 Sector 8 Astrology, writing Rohini, Delhi 110085 Any country 7844 Rakesh Ranjan (13) 7850 Stamps & coins, reading H.No. 2418, VIII-A Jitender Pal (10) India, Australia Middle Section-3 556/29, Faridabad 121001 Birla Public School 7856 Haryana, India Pilani 333031 Nitin Sarma (15) Reading, football Rajasthan, India XI-B. Aravalli House U.S.A. Painting, photography Lawrence School 7851 Europe Lovedale Praveen Kumar K. (15) Ootacamund 643003 7845 Roll No. 58 Tamil Nadu, India Pradeep (14) Sri Ramakrishna Computers, basketball 309, S.F.S. Flats Vidyashala India, U.S.A. Ashok Vihar! Phase IV Mysore 570020 New Delhi 110052, India 7857 Karnataka Lawn tennis, cricket Ishan Sethi (13) Painting, reading India, U.S.A.

India

DECEMBER 1995

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India

7862

Nagar

Sabario Asan (11)

64 Venkatarathinam

Kinari Bazaar

Delhi 110006

Cricket, badminton

7873

Norbu Lama (11)

Monggar, Bhutan

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